



General Introduction to Islam

by

Shaikh Ali Al-Tantawi



DAR ALMANARA

Jeddah - Saudi Arabia

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

*Bismi Allahi Alrrahhmani Alrraheemi
In the name of Allah, the most
Beneficent, the most Merciful*

**General Introduction to
Islam**

Written in Arabic

by

Shaikh Ali Al-Tantawi

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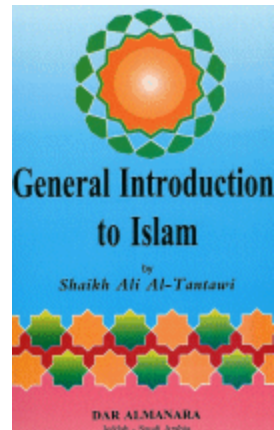
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Jeddah Tel. 6603652- FAX. 6603238

P.O.Box: 1250, Jeddah 21431 Makkah Tel.

5566375 P.O.Box: 2653 Makkah K.S.A.



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FOREWORD

My first taste of Islam was through meeting two Muslim women. They completely defied my stereotyped ideas of Muslim women. They were neither repressed nor narrow minded. And the way they spoke of Islam and the Prophet touched my heart.

Convinced that Islam was the right path, I started to explore further, but I was disappointed. Lots of the books I read had nothing to do with my own inner experience of Islam, nor with my two Muslim friends' living example of Islam. Most books were over-academic, culturally biased, badly written or proselytising in a way that did not appeal to my Western way of thinking, or convince me that the Islamic teachings were universal and inspiring. In fact, they were a veil to Islam and reconfirmed some of my previous prejudices about Muslims.

However, during this time, one of my two Muslim women friends, Nabila Kawaf, gave me Shaikh All AI-Tantawi's book. In spite of the sometimes literal translation from Arabic into English, Shaikh Tantawi's humour and personality shone through. The book had a quality of transmission that most of the other books I had read lacked. I found it inspiring. The anecdotal examples that Shaikh Tantawi gave clarified complicated concepts about Islam, particularly about the psychology of human beings, our weaknesses, our relationship with the cosmos and the need to follow the Sharia in order to develop our inner faith and dependence on God, and therefore evolve in the best possible way during our short time on earth.

I read the book again and again. I could see that it had been translated with the very best of intentions - but that in its present state, the book might not have the broad appeal it deserved. Then Nabila suggested I edit the book, with the help and support, if necessary, of her cousin, BassamSaab. And, with the author's kind permission, we set to work.

But rather like Shaikh Tantawi's first edition

of the book, when the original manuscript was mislaid and he had to start writing the book again, my own original editing of the book was devoured by the computer, and I had to begin the work once more. The second manuscript was also mislaid, so I had to work on the book a third time! These two false starts and a demanding working life have meant that the book has taken much time to edit. But throughout the various hold ups and delays, both Bassam and Nabila have been extremely patient. I would like to thank them both for their patience and support, and for introducing me to Shaikh Tantawi's work.

It has been challenging to work on a book that had already been translated from Arabic into English, and to remain true to

what the author originally wrote. I have tried to make the book fluent reading for the English speaker, in a way that will appeal to Muslims and non-Muslims alike, without losing Shaikh Tantawi's lucid and anecdotal style.

When you work close to a book, you begin to 'live' what that book transmits. I thank Shaikh Tantawi for being one of the stepping stones on my own journey. His book was one of the inspirations that called me to finally submit to the way of Islam. I trust, God willing, that it will serve others in the same way, and to help them realise the true universal message of Islam, applicable to any culture at any time.

SUELAKE

EDITOR

Acknowledgements

Dar Al-Manara Publishers, Jeddah, would like to thank all those who had a hand in translating, editing, proofreading and publishing this book.

Special gratitude is due to the Presidency of Sharia Courts & Islamic Affairs in the State of Qatar, publishers of an earlier translation of the

book (under the title: General Introduction to Islam: The Faith), and the translator. Dr. S.M.M. Nainar. We regret having failed (by mistake) to mention the above translation in the first edition of our translation. However, we stress now that the credit for the pioneering translation goes to the above parties, and pray to God that He reward them all bountifully. He never misses to reward good deeds.

We would like also to thank Dr. Abdul-Latief Al-Khaiat for his strenuous efforts in editing this second edition of the translation, his correction of the numerous errors of the first edition, and his careful proofreading. May he be rewarded in the Hereafter.

Our greatest indebtedness goes to the author, his eminence Shaikh Ali Al-Tantawi. May this book be added to his register of good deeds, that he may rejoice to find in the Hereafter.

All praise is to God, Lord of the worlds

. Dar Al-Manara, Publishers

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BACKGROUND TO THE BOOK

This book was first published in the sixties, since when it has been reprinted several times. In every edition, there has been an initial chapter

outlining the background to the book, wherein Shaikh Tantawi ha? explained the reasons for his writing the book, and the circumstances under which it was first published. In this, the tenth edition, we give a more detailed summary than in earlier editions.

Shaikh Tantawi grew up in Syria at the beginning of this century. He always expresses great admiration and gratitude to his father. Shaikh Mustafa Tantawi, who was a leading Faqih (jurist) in his country. According to Shaikh Tantawi, people in those days were either Shaikhs (scholars of Islam) or Effendis (Arabs who had "received a secular education). The Shaikhs were uninformed about the modern sciences of the Effendis, whereas the Effendis were ignorant of religion. Fortunately for Shaikh Tantawi, he was among the few to receive both types of

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education.

Some years ago Shaikh Tantawi wrote a book entitled : (Religious Reform), wherein he discussed the need for religion | and referred to the mooted question of whether man can live without religion. According to Shaikh Tantawi, such questions can only be answered by counter-questions, such as whether it is possible for man to lead a material life, casting off all his inner

emotions of love, and admiration of nature and her beauty.

In this context the author also discussed the values of western philosophers and thinkers such as Kant, Newton, Pascal and Goethe. To disprove the statement made by some of them that the universe was created by accident, the author gave the following example. If we were to place five balls, four white and one red in a bag, the probability of taking out the red ball the first time would be one in five. Similarly, if there were nine white balls, the ratio would be one in ten. But if one were to place an unlimited number of balls in the bag, the probability of picking out the red ball would be one to an unlimited number. Therefore we cannot say that the red ball could be picked at the first or even the hundredth attempt. So how could the planets that orbit on a set course without colliding with one another have come into existence by accident?

Therefore, there must be a Divine Power behind them.

In 1936 Shaikh Tantawi went to work as a secondary school teacher in Iraq, and he was assigned to the teaching of Arabic literature and religion. It was during this time that he felt the need for a simple and comprehensive book on Islam. He decided to campaign for this idea, and wrote many articles urging the Ulema to compile such a book. But no one

responded.

Many years passed. Meanwhile, other scholars who, like the

Author, were also well read in religious and secular studies had decided to write books on Islam. While many of these were excellent, a simple and comprehensive book on Islam had still not been published.

In 1966 the author wrote an article called "A General Introduction to Islam". It was published in the journal of the Muslim World League at Mecca, and caught the attention of a minister in the Saudi Arabian government, Mr. Muhammad Umar Tawfiq. He immediately advised the Muslim World League to commission the services of Shaikh Tantawi to write this book.

So finally Shaikh Tantawi took up this longawaited task. He worked on the book during one full summer vacation and an academic year.

Having finished writing all the chapters of the book, complete with footnotes and quotations, it only needed to be given the final touches. The author placed the manuscript in three large envelopes and went off to Jordan to spend his summer vacation. He carried the envelopes around with him carefully until his arrival, but once he was there, and was busy meeting friends

and relatives, he forgot all about it. Alas, during this time the manuscript was mislaid. He searched for it everywhere, and even asked all the taxi drivers in town if they had seen it, but in vain. Once he had got over the distress of losing the manuscript, Shaikh Tantawi set to work afresh. By the grace of God he was able to produce this book within ten days. and he wrote it with one source of reference - the Holy Quran.

The author gave this edition of the book the title "A

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General Introduction to Islam, Part I". He had intended to write two more parts in order to explain other aspects of Islam, but due to the pressures of a demanding schedule and ill health, he was unable to do so.

May God grant health and strength to this eminent author, and enable him to continue to be an inspiration to those interested in Islam.

Translator

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Imagine that you are travelling alone on a road which eventually divides into two: one track is bumpy and difficult, while the other is a smooth and comfortable path, sloping down to a plain.

The first road is uneven, rocky and full of thorny bushes and hidden dangers. It is also steep and hardgoing. However, the authorities have put up a notice at the beginning of the track which reads: EVEN THOUGH THIS ROAD MAY INITIALLY SEEM DIFFICULT, IT WILL EVENTUALLY LEAD YOU TO YOUR DESTINATION.

As for the second road, it is well-paved and both sides are lined with fruit trees and flowers, and there are plenty of cafes and places of entertainment. The traveller on this road will find everything he needs to satisfy his senses. But the notice at the beginning of this road warns: THIS IS A DANGEROUS AND DESTRUCTIVE ROAD. IT LEADS TO A CHASM AND CERTAIN DEATH.

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Which of the two paths would you choose to take?

More often than not, human nature opts for the easy way because it seems effortless, enjoyable and does not involve any suffering. It prefers to go its own way and to free itself of all commitments and responsibility. God has created this human instinct, and everyone, if left to himself, would follow the second path. However, the human mind intervenes at the junction of these two roads and applies the brakes. It urges Man to reflect and weigh up his options. Will

he choose to enjoy short-lived pleasure followed by unremitting pain, or a brief and temporary period of pain, followed by eternal *bliss* and joy? Eventually he will choose to take the first road.

These examples illustrate the comparison between heaven and hell. The way to hell is full of pleasures enjoyed by the human heart: temptations such as seductive beauty, sensuous pleasure and wealth, derived no matter from what source, and the kind of material pleasure sought after by so many. Besides this, unlimited freedom of action and renouncement of all forms of control are also experienced on this path, as human beings tend to crave this kind of freedom from all forms of restraint.

The path to paradise is certainly no bed of roses. One has to face untold hardships and suffering and to abide by many restrictions and the desire to resist the cravings of the heart. However, whereas the consequence of indulging in what are the temporary pleasures of life lead to constant suffering in hell, the reward for following the more difficult path is eternal joy and pleasure in the life hereafter.

It's rather like a student on the eve of his exams. He is reluctant to leave his family who are watching television, but

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he has to get on with his revision. However, after this temporary displeasure, he will enjoy the fruits of his success. 'Another example would be the case of a sick man who has to 'give up certain delicious foods. His reward is that he will regain his health.

God has set the two paths before us and He has created the -faculty within us to enable us to distinguish between the two so 'that everyone, regardless of his or her educational background, has the ability to discriminate between good and evil.

This means that in the same way as when we do something good we feel a sense of relief as we have a clear conscience, we equally feel upset when we do something wrong.

This faculty is not restricted to human beings; animals have it too. For example, if you throw a piece of meat to a cat he will eat it in front of you in a perfectly relaxed way. But if he snatches the meat from you he will run off to a corner and gobble it up on his own so that you won't see him and grab the meat back! So we can see from this example that in the first instance the cat's conscience is clear because he feels the meat has been given to him, whereas in the second example

his reaction shows he knows instinctively that he has acted aggressively. In other words, he has distinguished between right and wrong, and what is 'lawful' and what is 'prohibited'.

A dog too will come and lick his master when he has done something good as if he is asking him for a reward. But when he misbehaves the dog looks sheepish, as if he regrets what he has done or expects to be punished.

This is the interpretation of the verse in the Holy Quran which says:

Have We not shown him the two paths (of good and

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evil)? (90: 80).

God has appointed certain men to preach to and guide mankind on the path of paradise. They are the prophets. The path to hell also has those who lure men to it. They are God's adversaries.

The *ulema* (scholars and religious leaders) follow in the prophets' footsteps. Fatima, daughter of our Prophet Muhammad, (peace be upon him), did not inherit property or wealth from him. The ulema inherited the *da'wah* (the task of spreading the message of his religion) from him. Whoever fulfills this task with absolute sincerity

and to the best of his ability deserves the honour of this inheritance.

Da'wah is difficult, given man's strong desire for freedom, which religion wants to restrain. Religion endeavours to curb human nature when it gets out of control and indulges in every pleasure. Religion readily responds to any temptation to commit sins or behave immorally. Human nature is rather like a reservoir full of water, situated on top of a high hill. It's easy to destroy the reservoir: you merely pierce it with something sharp and the water will overflow in no time, flooding the valley below. But if you want to refill the reservoir, it's a different matter. You'll need to go to a great deal of trouble, install a pump and spend a vast amount of money. Here's another example to illustrate human weakness. If you want to bring a heavy boulder to the foot of a mountain, all you need do is to push it slightly and it will roll down, - but getting it back to the top is a tremendous task! And that's the way of human nature.

A friend who is not adhering to a religious path might tell

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you about a beautiful woman who performs

dancing shows in the ,nude, and you might be tempted to go along and see her. If a religious person were to come along at this point to advise you against seeing the woman, you might find it difficult to resist temptation and listen to his advice.

Those who spread evil hardly have to exert themselves at all in order to spread their mischief, whereas those who uphold moral values and noble actions have to make a tremendous effort. The 'evil monger' has all the factors which play upon human weakness at his fingertips: feminine charms unashamedly exposed, sexual arousal and easy access to whatever appeals to the senses. How can the preachers of Islam compete with all these attractions? What do they have to offer in their place? Simply restraint and moderation.

You may find yourself looking at a girl who is not wearing the veil which Muslim women are required to wear, and you might fantasise about the shape of her body. At that point a preacher would ask you to lower your glance and not to look at her.

Another example is of a businessman who finds the practice of lending money at a high rate of interest the best and quickest way of making money. But the preacher would advise him not to

make money in this way. An employee might notice a colleague accepting a bribe equivalent to six months' salary and imagine how much he and his family would benefit if he did likewise. The preacher, however, would intervene at this point advising him to restrain himself from carrying out such an action.

Spiritual teachers advise all such people, warning them to

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keep away from temporary pleasures that cross their path, - to give up temptations in the physical world for the sake of the unseen: that which they cannot perceive at that moment. They encourage them to control their weak wills and the desires of their hearts, even though this is a tremendous task and a heavy burden. It should not be a wonder that we describe religion as a heavy burden. Indeed, Allah the Almighty has described it like this in the Holy Quran: Behold, we shall bestow upon thee a weighty message (73:5).

Every noble act weighs down the human soul. In the example we looked at, of the student leaving his family watching television in order to revise for his exams, he was no doubt fed up! It is also hard for someone who is a student of

knowledge to detach himself from a social gathering when he is enjoying himself, for the sake of reading and teaching. The same goes for a person who is awakened at dawn to perform *fajr* (dawn prayer). Likewise, a man who sets out on the path of jihad (holy war) also takes a great burden upon himself, when he says goodbye to his wife and family.

We therefore find there are far more unrighteous and unworthy people around than the other way round. Those who remember God and let Him guide them are far fewer than those who opt for the 'easy path'. And this is why it is harmful for us to fall blindly in line with the majority:

Now if thou pay heed to the majority of those (who live) on earth, they will but lead thee astray from the path of God (6:116).

However, if scarcity and rarity were not qualities of eminence and superiority, diamonds would not be hard to find

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and coal would not be in such abundance. Nor would great men of genius, brave heroes and men of distinction be so few and far between.

For many generations, prophets and men of true knowledge have urged us to follow the right path,

while the corrupt and virtueless have tried to mislead us. And in fact, we have the faculty within us to go either way.

There is a part of our inner selves that accepts the teachings of the prophets, and another part that is influenced by those who have been misled. The human intellect is the side that understands truth and the way of the prophets; and there is another side that provokes us into wrong doing.

"What's the difference between the mind and the soul?" you may ask. I do not claim to provide here a clear definition to clarify and distinguish one from the other - and even science has failed to throw a light on them' However, I shall try to explain.

We all say. "I said to myself or "My mind told me" (or. my intellect}. But what is 'you'and what is your'self? And what is your mind? Even though these things are still not clear to us, and I am not going to discover something unknown, I shall attempt to give a tangible example,

The human body is in constant change, and cells which lived in it years ago no longer exist, The self is the same: its hopes, aspirations, pains and sufferings are constantly changing. At this point you may well ask which part of the 'I' is unchanging? It is the soul- And your next question may be "What is the soul ?" God has revealed knowledge to us about many

mysteries of the human body: the functions of our limbs and cures for

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many diseases. He has also informed us about sicknesses of the human self. He has told us that some selves are more prone to doing wrong, while others are self-critical; in contrast, other selves are completely satisfied and peaceful. He has also told us that every self tastes death. But the Almighty has not disclosed anything concerning the human soul, as this knowledge belongs only to God.

The soul is not affected by limits of time and space. For example, a person in your presence may drop off to sleep for fifteen minutes. And yet in that time may have 'travelled' to America or India, lived there for twenty or thirty years and experienced tremendous joys and sorrow. But how could a span of twenty years or more possibly be contained in fifteen minutes? This example shows how we can undergo great suffering or enjoy blessings beyond the grave. The soul itself is not affected by anything ~ not even disease or health. It was in existence before it was committed to this body and to this self, and it will remain even after we depart from our

bodies and after the self has vanished.

Here is another example of the conflict between the mind and the self You may be warm and cosy in bed, fast asleep on a cold night when the alarm goes to wake you up for dawn prayer. At that moment an inner voice in you tells you to get up and pray. Just as you're about to get up, you hear another inner voice which says "Why don't you sleep for a bit longer?" "But prayer is better than sleeping," the first voice intervenes. "It would be lovely to go on sleeping," the second voice retorts, "and there's plenty of time. You can be a few minutes late." And so the battle between the two voices continues: "Sleep!" "Get up!" "Sleep!" "Get up!" The former is the mind and the latter is the self.

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This kind of situation shows up in many shapes and forms. It is the kind of hesitation that comes over a person who wants to jump across a wide ditch. He would like to get across, but is afraid of falling. He hears two different voices in his inner self: "Jump!" "Don't jump -turn back!" If he responds to the voice that tells him to jump, he will get to the other side. But if he hesitates and waits for the voice that tells him to turn back, and

then decides to jump, he is bound to fall into the ditch.

'In every situation like the ones above, we find ourselves having to make a choice. At times like this, good reason can only prevail if we have faith. It is only when we have *iman* (faith) that we can achieve victory of the mind over the body.

The force of iman is proportional to the victory of the power of your mind.

However, this does not mean that the mind can always conquer the desires of the body, and that a Muslim will never make mistakes. Islam is a compassionate religion; it is a practical faith, based on the realities of life. God has not created human beings to be angels, devils, domestic animals or wild beasts. Angels have been created to obey and worship; devils, for disobedience and blasphemy, and domestic and wild beasts are not bestowed with the power of reasoning, but with instincts. This means they are not under obligation to obey the divine commandments and will not be held responsible for their actions. We do not belong to any of these categories. So what are we? What exactly is a human being?

/ Every human being is a unique creation containing some angelic, devilish and even animal-like characteristics. His angelic qualities

are predominant when he sincerely worships God and establishes a close relationship with Him.

Such a man is like the angels:

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"who do not disobey God in whatever He has commanded them, but (always) do what they are bidden to do "(66.6).

But if a human being turns his back on or shows contempt for his Creator, or worships more than one God. he will fall victim to negative and harmful influences. When such a man gets angry he acts like a wild man, his sole aim being to beat his enemy at all costs, even if this means attacking him physically. On such occasions, a human being behaves like a wild beast. Likewise, if a man is unable to control his sexual urges, the animal side of his nature takes him over completely.

These two tendencies form the basis of human nature, one inclining towards good and one towards evil. God, however, has endowed man with the power of reasoning and the will to choose which way is best. If he is able to use his willpower and exercise good sense he will be amongst those who enjoy eternal happiness in the life hereafter. If not, he will bear the

consequences and suffer.

The self by its very nature is inclined towards freedom. However, religion restricts this 'freedom' in order to discipline the self. Without such restriction, we could lose all good values and the self might lose control and act in a completely irresponsible way. With such unrestrained freedom, human society could run amok, with human beings behaving like lunatics. For example, a mad man does whatever comes into his mind: he might strip off his clothes and wander round the streets naked. He might even sit on the shoulders of a bus driver! Or he could take a fancy to your clothes and strip them off you. He may find your daughter attractive and want to have a sexual relationship with her based on passion, and not as ordained by Islam.

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A lunatic is the only person who enjoys total freedom. A sane person is governed by his common sense which is rather like a 'tether or strap that binds him'. This is reflected in the Arabic word *aql* 'mind' which refers to the rope with which a camel is tied. The word *hikmah*, meaning wisdom, is similar, in that it is also derived from the meaning of a tether. The word 'civilisation' also reflects the meaning of such a

bond or tether, in that it places limits on your conduct in everyday life. It prescribes respect for the rights of others and for the accepted conventions, traditions, etc., of a society. 'Justice' is another concept that has the same implication, because it fixes a limit on your freedom with regards to the freedom of your neighbour.

The self is constantly being tempted since what is alluring is always attractive. For example, you may enjoy listening to and taking part in gossip, hearing about what people have or haven't done, and you may derive a vicarious pleasure in it, because you feel that you are better than the person whose weaknesses are being exposed. In the same way, theft may be considered as fun, as it's an easy and effortless way of bringing in money. The self may find committing adultery an enjoyable way of satisfying its desires. Cheating in an examination helps the person to pass it, without having made an effort. The self may want to shirk its duties, thus becoming lazy and lethargic. But if you really stop and think, you will find that this short-lived freedom is not worth the trouble, because in return you will have to bear the consequences of your misdeeds for a long time. How would a person feel, if he was asked to sign a legal contract granting him whatever he wanted to satisfy his wildest dreams, for a year: he could live in

whatever country he chose,

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and have as many love affairs as he wanted. Imagine that contract stated that nothing would be forbidden -

but it also stipulated that at the end of the year he

would be hanged. Wouldn't he say "No pleasure

lasting for a year is worth being hanged for!"?

Wouldn't he realise that as soon as the noose was

tightened round his neck he could not take any of these

sources of pleasure with him? Wouldn't he understand

that even though the pain of being hanged may only

last for a minute, the torture in the life hereafter would

never come to an end?

There can hardly be anyone in the world who has

not sinned at some point in their life, and enjoyed

committing that sin. The least of all sins might be the

reluctance to get up and perform the dawn prayer. If

we stop and think about all the pleasures we might

have enjoyed ten years ago and then ask whether we

are left with any of those pleasures now, what's the

answer?... Nothing! To perform any duty is always

hard and causes some discomfort. For example, the

duty of fasting during the month of Ramadan means

we Muslims have to suffer feelings of hunger and

thirst. But what effects are we feeling now from those

sufferings? What is left of the hunger pangs we

underwent during the month of Ramadan ten years ago?

The pleasures of sin may have vanished, but the punishment remains. Whereas the pains and sufferings undergone for the sake of performing duties have disappeared, but the reward stays with us.

What consequences await us at the hour of death from all the pleasures we enjoyed and the sufferings we underwent?

Deep down in our hearts we always want to repent and return to the path of God, but we put it off and play a waiting

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game. For example I used to tell myself that I would repent and follow God's way after performing Haj. I would perform Haj regularly, but I still didn't repent! My fortieth year and my sixtieth years went by and I still hadn't repented. This does not mean that I have been leading a life full of sin all these years. Not at all, thank God. But that example just shows that man wants to lead a good life, but he keeps finding excuses to put it off. He thinks he has plenty of time ahead and can therefore afford to vegetate - until, all of a sudden, he is struck by death. I myself have had

two near death experiences, and this made me repent every moment I had wasted in acts of disobedience to God, and this feeling of repentance persisted for several months and during that time I became a good person. Later on though, I became involved yet again in the rough and tumble of life - and forgot about death.

We all forget death. Even seeing funerals go by isn't enough to remind us that we will die one day. Even during prayers at funerals our minds may wander onto worldly matters. We think that everyone else is going to die except us, and yet, deep down, we know we shall depart from this world one day.

A man may live up to sixty, seventy or even a hundred, but he is bound to die one day. You must know people who lived on to a great age, but they all died. Perhaps you know that Noah lived till he was 950, preaching to his people. Where is Noah now? Has he been living in the world all this time? Has he been excluded from death? Why is it then, that we do not think about death and prepare for it, since it is inevitable?

A person who is going on a journey starts getting ready from the moment a date has been fixed until his departure. I was once in the company of some Jordanian teachers who had

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signed contracts for employment in Saudi Arabia. informed that their flights were scheduled to take off one after the other. Those who had prepared themselves in time were able

to leave as scheduled as soon as they had attended to passport formalities and said goodbye to their families.

But

those who needed more time to get ready for the journey were not given that time and were therefore unable to leave.

So what can we say about a call for departure announced by

the Angel of Death! It is a call that can be neither put off nor

ignored The Angel of Death will seize a person even if he is unwilling and will not allow him any respite. And who knows when the Angel of Death will arrive? What is death exactly? What is the truth about it?

Human life is divided into stages: the first stage is the embryo in a mother's womb; then comes life in this world followed by the stage of *barzakh* (the interim period between death and resurrection). Finally, there is the eternal stage of the life hereafter. Each successive stage has the same degree of relativity to the one next to it.

The vastness of this world when compared to the narrow space in the mother's womb is like the vastness of the barzakh when compared to life in the world; the same goes for the vastness of the life hereafter when compared to the barzakh. When a child is in the embryonic form he thinks his entire world is his mother's womb. If the embryo were to be asked about the meaning of his exit from the womb, he might say that it would mean death. If the embryo consisted of twins and one was born before the other, the one who was born late might say] that his twin brother had died and been buried in an unknown world. He would weep if he had seen his twin's placenta discarded and thrown away in just the same way a mother would grieve over her son's dead body. A mother who has tried

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To keep her child clean and sees him being buried in the earth of his grave breaks down. What she doesn't realise is that this is like the placenta: it is like a dirty shirt that needs

to be "thrown away. It is a garment whose life is over and is no longer needed.

This is what death is. In fact it is a 'new birth'. It is an exit *.into* another dimension which is longer and wider in terms of time and space. The world we live in

is only a place of transit. Our life in it is similar to the life of a migrant going to the United States by ship. He pays for a pleasant cabin and makes provisions to ensure he has a comfortable trip. But do you think he would bother to spend all his money renovating the amenities in his cabin and arrive in the United States penniless as a consequence? Or would he say to himself: 'I'LL only be staying in this cabin for a week, so I might as well enjoy what's provided for and save my money for my home in the States as 'that is where I'll be taking up permanent residence."

Here's another example to compare this world with the world to come. Some years ago the United States announced that it was going to carry out an atomic test on a small island in the Pacific Ocean. This island was inhabited by a few hundred fishermen who were asked to vacate the island and were offered residence in the country of their choice, with the same terms and conditions as those they had been used to. A final date was fixed, giving them time to submit their particulars and prepare for their departure. The inhabitants reacted in different ways. Some of them did as they were advised, some dilly-dallied and neglected the matter till the final date, whereas others said the whole issue was based on lies, that there was no such place as the United States and they were therefore not willing to leave the island.

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It did not occur to them that the whole island would be blow to pieces and left in ruins.

This example illustrates the different attitudes that may has to life on earth. The believer is aware of what is to come in the hereafter and therefore prepares for it by leading a life of repentance and obedience, and we can compare him to the first; group of fishermen who started to pack up and get ready to go and live in a different place. But the believer who does not obey God and ignores his obligations is like the second group of fishermen, who took no notice of the fact that danger was imminent. As for the non-believer, he is like the third group of fishermen: he rejects and doubts the truth of religion. He is convinced that there is no life after this worldly existence, and that death is a deep sleep, a permanent rest and that he will be extinct.

This does not mean that tslam calls upon every Muslim to give up this worl d completely and free him sel f of all responsibilities. Islam does not say that mosques provide the only place of interest for Muslims; nor does it say that they should live in caves and lead the life of hermits. On the contrary, Islam calls upon Muslims to set the best example of a civilised people and to strive to be among the

richest in terms of material wealth as well as to take a lead among scientists. It urges every Muslim to lead a balanced and healthy life, taking care of his or her body by eating proper food and keeping fit. Islam advises Muslims not to overwork and to enjoy life and relax, so long as this recreation does not break the boundaries . of Islam. It urges a Muslim to take care of his family and carry out certain duties in the society in which he lives. He should be just as aware of these obligations as of the principles of faith in the Oneness of God and the need to obey Him.

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In other words, a Muslim may accumulate wealth, provided it is accumulated lawfully.

Equally, he may enjoy all the lawfully permitted good things in life. And he should be very much of this world, provided that he remains true to his faith and does not let any form of polytheism, explicit or implicit, infiltrate into his faith. He must keep away from whatever is deemed to be unlawful and perform all his religious duties.

Wealth is something which should be carefully possessed in a Muslim's hands and not in his heart, because his dependence should be on God and not on material possessions. And his one and

only purpose in life should be constantly to seek to do what is acceptable to God.

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CHAPTER II

WHAT IS ISLAM?

" Once I asked my students the following question:

"If a foreigner were to come and ask you to explain all about Islam in ^an hour, what would you do?" This is how they responded: "That: would be impossible! He would have to study the principle of the Oneness of God, commentaries on the Holy Quran - and he'd have to learn how to recite from the Holy Quran, study the *hadith* (sayings of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), the system of Islamic law. He'd also need to delve into problems and issues which could take him fifty years'

I retorted by saying, "Glory be to God! What about the simple and uneducated Bedouin who came to our Prophet and learned all about Islam Just by staying in his company for a day - or even less? And didn't those very same Bedouin then carry the message of Islam to the desert folk, and in turn become their teachers and guides? Don't you remember how our Prophet explained our religion in three brief sentences? He spoke about *imun* (faith) Islam (the religion) and *ihsun* (Man's

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realisation of his relation to God). So why is it, then, that we can't explain our religion in an hour in this day and' age?"

So what is Islam - and how does one become a Muslim?

Every creed, whether its basic principles are based on truth or falsehood, every society, good or bad, and every political party, regardless of whether its intentions are noble or not, operates on certain basic principles and precepts that define its goal and outline its course of action.

These principles and precepts are put together in the form of a constitution to guide its members and followers.

Anyone wishing to become a member of such an organisation would need to start off by studying these guidelines. If he finds that they satisfy both his conscious and subconscious mind, and believes without any doubt in their validity, he will decide to Join that organisation and become one of its members and supporters. From then on he has to obey the laws laid down in the constitution and to pay the membership fee. He also has to prove, in due course, his genuine commitment to the principles and precepts of the organisation. This means he has to remind himself

of them constantly and make sure he does nothing to contradict them. He has to set an example, through his character and behaviour, of one who ardently follows and supports those principles. So we can say that membership to a society means:

- * Knowledge of its system;**
- * belief in its principles;**
- * adhering to its regulations;**
- * conducting oneself in everyday life according to those**

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principles and regulations.

—

These are accepted conventions which are all applicable to Islam. Anyone wishing to embrace Islam has to accept its intellectual principles with total conviction right from the start. This means he will have developed the faith within himself. The principles he has to accept are outlined briefly as follows:

- * This material world is not the be-all and end-all of existence, and life in this world is only a part of the eternal life;**
- * man existed even before he was born and will continue . to exist after death; he did not create himself but had**

been created before he was conscious of his human existence;

*** the inanimate objects around him couldn't have created him, as he is a rational being and they are not;**

*** everything in this universe has been created from nothingness by the one God, God the Almighty;**

*** God is the only one who grants life and causes death. It is He who created everything, and if He wishes. He will destroy and obliterate it;**

*** Almighty God does not resemble His creation in any way. He existed before this creation and He is eternal and has unlimited knowledge;**

*** He is completely just in a way that cannot be assessed in human terms;**

• it is He who has laid down what we call the laws of nature,

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*** He has created everything according to a well-defined measure before all creation, thus all the phenomena of activity, inactivity, consistency and inconsistency that we can observe in both animate and inanimate beings have been**

clearly defined and distinct boundaries have; been set,

*** man has been bestowed with the power of**

intellect to deal with whatever matters he is presented with and he has been given the power of reasoning with which he can make his own choice and will power to enable him to achieve what he wants;

*** God has created an eternal life beyond this temporary life, where the doer of good will be rewarded with a life in paradise and the wrong doer will be punished and exist in hell.**

This God is One. No one else may be worshipped but Him; no one can take us nearer to Him to plead on our behalf without His permission. Thus we should worship God alone, in all sincerity and purity.

All the material beings that we can see and feel, have been created by Him.

He has also created unseen beings, some animate and others inanimate, which we cannot see. Among the unseen beings are the angels, who have been created for absolute good; and then there are the satans, who have been created as dark and negative forces. Apart from these there is a third category of unseen beings, the jinn, who are divided into satans and 'good' or 'obedient' jinn. And

from amongst human beings. God selects certain people to whom the sharia (Divine Law) is revealed, so that they can guide humanity towards it. These people are the prophets.

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This divine law is contained in all the books revealed from The heavens. God takes us through progressive “steps” in each book until the final book, the Holy Quran. Books that preceded it were either distorted or got lost and forgotten. The Holy Quran, however, has remained intact. The last of these prophets is Muhammad bin Abdullah, an Arab of the Qurayshi tribe. With him there was an end to all the previous divine messages and religions. There has been no other prophet since his time. The Holy Quran is the constitution of Islam. Whoever endorses the fact that it has been revealed by God and believes in it completely, is a *mu'min* (believer). Iman (faith) in this sense can only be seen by God because human beings cannot penetrate into human hearts and know what is in them. Therefore it is essential, in order to be accepted in the fold of Islam, that a man declare his faith by pronouncing two Statements,

namely: "I bear witness that there is no God but Allah and I bear witness that Muhammad is the Prophet of God." The moment he pronounces this statement of faith he becomes a Muslim and is entitled to all the rights enjoyed by Muslims; he also agrees to perform all the duties enjoined upon him by Islam.

These *ibadat* (duties) are the prescribed forms of worship. There are only a few and they are easy to perform and do not require much effort or exertion. There are four, as outlined below:

1 - A Muslim has to pray two *rak'ats* (prostrations) at dawn, during which time he has communion with his Lord. He asks Him of His goodness and seeks refuge in Him from His punishment. Before making these prostrations, a Muslim has to perform *-wudu* (ablutions): he washes his face, hands and

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feet, or takes a bath if he is in a state of ritual impurity.

Besides the dawn prayer, he has to pray at four other times four rak'ats at midday; four rak'ats in the afternoon; three rak'ats at sunset; four rak'ats at night:

These are obligatory prayers, the performing

of which will not, on the whole, take more than half an hour per day. There is no particular place or person required for the performance of these prayers, and it is not necessary for a Muslim to have an intermediary when he prays, as he prays directly to his Lord.

2- In a certain month during the year. a Muslim has to fast. This is known as the period of Ramadan. Breakfast is eaten before dawn, lunch is taken after sunset, and during the day all Muslims abstain from food and water and must not have sexual intercourse.

Ramadan is a month of self-purification for every Muslim when he purifies his body and soul. It is also a month to fulfill the desire to do good and be generous, and to reflect the brotherhood of man in the material life.

3 - A Muslim has to give 2.5 % of his wealth as alms to the poor and needy. He does this on an annual basis, once his own needs and those of his family have been met. This financial support paid by every Muslim comes as a great source of comfort' and assistance to the poor, the sick and the needy. It thus helps to alleviate poverty and establishes a form of social security,

4 - Islam has arranged certain periodical gatherings for Muslims. They congregate

together five times a day to offer prayer. There need be no disruption of work for anyone whatever his trade or profession. Those who miss the congregation can pray at home, though they will, in fact

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deprive themselves of the joyful reward of praying together in a group.

Then there is the weekly congregation on Fridays for *jum'a* prayer. This lasts for less than an hour, and it is compulsory for all male Muslims to attend.

Besides the above, there are mass congregations held twice a year on the occasion of the two Eids (festivals). Attendance is not compulsory and they last less than an hour.

Finally there is the annual world congregation known as the Haj. It is a kind of mammoth public gathering, held once a year in a certain place. This congregation provides guidance in all aspects: spiritual, physical and intellectual. A Muslim is expected to attend once in his lifetime, but only if he is able to do so.

These are the duties and acts of worship enjoined upon every Muslim.

Apart from the above, abstention from certain modes of behaviour are also deemed as *ibadah* (worship). These are actions which any sensible person would deplore, such as killing without a valid reason, intruding on the rights of others, aggressive behaviour, all forms of injustice, any kind of intoxication which would affect the brain, adultery, since it destroys honour and dignity and violates the sanctioned form of blood relationship. Other forms of forbidden behaviour include usury, lying, betrayal and deserting any form of military service which seeks to glorify the Divine Writ, making false oaths or producing false witnesses - and, above all, disobedience to one's parents or dismissing them and neglecting their needs.

However, God forgives a Muslim who fails to carry out

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some of his duties and disobeys some of the Islamic laws but repents and asks for pardon.

On the other hand, a Muslim who does not repent will be considered as a rebel, who will be punished in the next world. This punishment will, however, be only temporary

and will not be equal to that of a non-believer.

As for a Muslim who refuses to acknowledge any basic Islamic principle or belief, rejects his duties and Islamic regulations or denies even the smallest detail outlined in the Holy Quran, he will be considered as an apostate deprived of his Islamic identity. Apostasy is similar to a crime of high treason, from the Islamic point of view. Unless a person gives up his unislamic beliefs and repents, he will be given a death sentence. Faith has to be accepted in totality and, therefore, a denial of any aspect is deemed as a denial of the whole. Therefore, anyone who accepts 99% of the faith but denies 1% is considered an infidel.

You may come across Muslims who are nonbelievers. They can be compared with someone who joins a political party or a society, attends all its meetings, pays his subscription - and does whatever is required of a member, but nonetheless refuses to accept its principles and remains unconvinced. It may seem that such a person has joined the party or society simply to find out what's going on or to create trouble. Such a Muslim is a hypocrite - hypocrisy is defined as "outward profession of faith and concealment of

disbelief. Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, used to say that a hypocrite can be recognised in three ways: failure to keep his promise, I lying and betraying anyone's trust. A hypocrite pronounces statements of faith and performs his religious duties, yet deep and down he remains unconvinced. Such a person may be considered a Muslim by the outside world but not by God, Who knows what is hidden in our hearts and innermost beings.

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What Is Islam?

In brief, the intellectual principles of Islam are:

- * belief in the angels; * belief in destiny;**
- * expression of the statements of faith;**
- * performance of the obligatory prayers;**
- * fasting in the month of Ramadan;**
- * payment of *zakat* (alms);**
- * performance of Haj (pilgrimage) to Mecca once in a lifetime, if this is possible;**
- * abstention from everything that is forbidden by Muslim consensus.**

Generally speaking, adhering to the *Iman* is more beneficial to us - we feel better and enjoy

tremendous rewards. This is why, even though it may be hard to stick to these laws 100%, we feel better in ourselves if we follow them.

Our Prophet Muhammad summed up the characteristics of a true Muslim in an eloquent sentence which states the essence of faith and action in a nutshell: "You should worship God as if you can see him." This means we must strive to be in total awareness of God's presence all the time.

This is the very essence of Islam - to be Godconscious in all our actions, whether or not they are serious. God is watching us constantly and is aware of our every move. This is why anyone who is truly God-conscious will obey His laws, and he will not despair either, knowing that God is with him all the time. A person who is strengthened in this way will not need to ask for help from anyone because he can always ask God to fulfill his needs. And, if anyone disobeys God's laws,

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As it is in his nature to sin, provided he asks for forgiveness, God will forgive him.

This is just a brief introduction to Islam and in to following chapters we shall be looking into all aspects of faith in detail.

CHAPTER III

DEFINITION OF FAITH

Before going into the subject of doctrine in detail we should

define certain terms which frequently appear in books on this subject and which are often used by scholars of Islam.

These terms are 'doubt', 'assumption' and 'knowledge'.

After

we have examined them we shall begin to look into the meaning of

faith.

Descartes, the renowned French philosopher and

mathematician, and, before him. Imam Ghazali in

his book "Saviour from Misguidance" both

chose 'doubt' as a point of departure for their

enquiry into certainty. In fact, Descartes : used

'doubt as a means to reach certainty. So what do

we 'mean by 'doubt'?

If someone were to ask you while you were staying in the

.centre of a city whether it was raining in the suburbs you

would be unable to reply, even though the suburbs are

only

about twenty miles away. You would have no definite

evidence one way or the other. And this is the case with

the

concept of doubt. You can make a guess, but you cannot be 100% sure.

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However, if you were to look into the distance and see some rain clouds you might be inclined to say: "It looks as if it is raining in the suburbs." This means that it's very likely that it is raining, and this possibility regarding the existence of something, is known as 'assumption'.

Should you take a further look and notice that the rain clouds are quite thick and heavy, and also see a flash of lightning, your assumption regarding the possibility of rain increases and your response to the original question will be more positive. At this point you might well reply: "I'm inclined to think it's raining in the suburbs now." But if you were to go into the suburbs and actually see the rain falling, your assumption would become a certainty. And this is what scholars term as "knowledge'.

If we examine the various meanings of the word 'knowledge' we see that firstly we have 'absolute knowledge' as opposed to ignorance. Knowledge also embraces science in contrast to the arts and philosophy. For example, physics and

chemistry are both sciences whereas art and poetry belong to the domain of the arts. In the context of science where the ultimate goal of knowledge is to seek the truth, the intellect is used as a tool to achieve this aim. The methods adopted are 'enquiry', 'experiment' and 'deduction'. In the case of the arts, beauty is the ultimate goal and the means to that end are human feelings and sentiments.

In the case of our present discussion, we shall be referring to knowledge in the context of certainty as opposed to doubt and assumption.

Essential Knowledge and Theoretical Knowledge

Knowledge gained through the senses and observation

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needs no proof For example, if you can see a mountain with your own eyes you need no evidence of its existence, which is obvious to you and anyone else who sees the same mountain.

This is what is described as 'essential knowledge', whereas the knowledge that the sum of the square of the two sides of a right-angled triangle is equal to the square of the hypotenuse, needs intellectual proof as any scientist will tell you. But a layman does not know and will not

believe it unless he has some sort of back up as evidence, even though he may physically be observing the triangle. This kind of knowledge, requiring mental proof, is known as 'theoretical knowledge'.

Self Evident Truth and Creed

Some theoretical knowledge needs proof because it cannot be perceived merely by logic and observation. Nevertheless, it is common and popular knowledge of which everyone, regardless of age or education, is aware. Such knowledge almost falls into the category of essential knowledge. For example: "A part is smaller than the whole" is a theoretical statement, but, although the category of theoretical knowledge basically needs to be proved, you will hardly find anyone who doubts this statement or needs evidence of it. Even a child will accept it. If you were, for example, to take a bar of chocolate from a child and give him back just a small piece, telling him that the piece you have returned is bigger than the bar of chocolate, he would not be convinced and would not accept it. This is because it is self-evident that any part of any thing is smaller than its whole.

The statement regarding identity-that is, that everything has an identity of its own, is also a

self evident truth. If Someone were to ask you to prove that the pen you were holding was not a teaspoon, you would respond by saying:

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"That's quite obvious and doesn't need any proof!"

So these self evident truths are obvious facts which everyone acknowledges - facts that do not need proof. And when a self evident truth enters the inner consciousness and establishes itself there, it creates an impact on intuition and all aspects of behaviour - and is known as faith.

Belief in it is known as Iman.

However, we all know that although people often believe in truth, more often than not they believe in 'untrue' ideologies. Nowadays there are many breakaway groups with misleading principles not based on truth, and these groups have attracted a lot of ardent followers who sacrifice all they have for the sake; of these groups. Such people cannot be regarded as believers; in the absolute meaning of the word. God says in the Holy Quran:

Art thou not aware of those who, having been granted their share of the Divine Writ, (now) believe in unfounded mysteries and in the powers of evil. (4:51)

And most of them do not even believe in

God without (also) ascribing divine powers to other beings beside Him (12:106).

As for Iman, and all the derivatives of this word, they are used exclusively to denote belief in all that pertains to the Holy' Quran and the *sunnah* (tradition). This belief can be summed up as follows. To believe:

- * in God as the One and Only God;**
- * that He is All-powerful and Almighty, the One Who has supreme ownership of all things;**
- * that He alone is to be worshipped, and no one else is to be**

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associated with Him in worship;

- in all that has been revealed to His prophet, regarding the angels, the prophets and the Day of Judgement and destiny, regardless of whether this destiny is in our favour or full of hardship.**

A person who holds the above belief is a *Mu'min* (believer). But if he makes any compromise regarding them, withdraws from them or hesitates to endorse his beliefs or expresses doubts, he will lose the qualities of Iman and will be accepted as a disbeliever.

CHAPTER IV**CODES OF BELIEF**

Just before the Second World War when I was teaching Arabic literature in Baghdad, I was asked to teach religious Studies. The syllabus consisted of certain *surah* (chapters) of the Holy Quran which had to be explained and interpreted. I arrived at my class to find a completely undisciplined group of students who had turned the period designated to religious studies into a time for recreation and idle chat. But when I was teaching "the very same class literature, you could hear a pin drop.

I realised that their poor attention in the religious studies class 'was due to their wavering faith. So I told them to put

A way their copies of the Holy Quran - and listen.

As soon as I started reciting from the Holy Quran, I felt

inspired by God. This led to my producing a new work on the abject of Iman, in which I incorporated the codes of belief.

These codes are as follows:

1) I have no doubts about anything that I can perceive

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through my senses

We all accept this fundamental truth. However, if I walk through the desert at noon and see a lake in the distance, but only find sand when I reach that spot, what appeared to be a lake turned out to be mirage. Likewise if I put a pencil in a glass of water it will look as if it is broken, though in actual fact it is not, You might go to a party where, as it gets late, you start talking about the supernatural - ghosts, etc., and get so carried away that you feel as if a ghost or demon is following you, whereas in reality there is nothing there. It's rather like a conjuring trick. A magician will produce strange objects which seem to be real, even though they are not.

So our senses can delude and deceive us. But does this mean that I should doubt the existence of something I can feel? Quite the reverse - because if I doubt what I see, hear and feel, there will be a conflict between fact and fantasy that will eventually drive me crazy.

But I would like to add another condition here about obtaining knowledge - meaning 'certainty regarding the existence of what I sense'.

The mind may misjudge something the first

time it perceives it. For example, it may think a mirage is a lake, but the second time it sees it will not make the mistake. Similarly it will soon realise that even though the pencil on the glass of water looks as if it is broken, in fact it is not.

The various ways in which the senses delude us are limited and easy to recognise. This includes the tricks that Pharaoh's magicians used to perform in the past, and the circus tricks we

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Codes of Belief

enjoy in this day and age.

2) Certainty about past and present events received through a reliable source is as reliable as the certainty we would have had if we had been present.

There are certain facts about which we are sure, even though we may not have direct experience of them. For example, we all know that India and Brazil are countries that exist though we may not have visited them. We also know for a fact that Alexander the Great conquered Persia, even though we did not witness the battles in which he fought.

In fact, if we all looked inward, we would soon realise that the number of facts about which we are sure even though we cannot perceive or experience them directly, far surpass those we have actually experienced, such as countries we have not visited and

events, both past and present, that we have not witnessed directly.

What evidence, then, do we have of their existence? Of course we draw certain conclusions from what we have always been told throughout history and our own lives. It would be absurd to think that each generation has fabricated events and ideas to pass on to the next.

3) How much knowledge can we perceive through our senses? Can our senses comprehend everything that exists?

We can compare the human mind in relation to the senses as follows. Imagine that orders have been given to shut us up in a tower. All the windows and doors are shut, so that all we can see of the outside world is through cracks in the wall.

If we peep through one crack facing east, we can see a river, looking west through another crevice, we can see a

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mountain. In a northerly direction we can see a large mansion, and south a playground.

The human mind is the prisoner and the body the tower, with the cracks representing the senses.

The sense of sight sees colours, the sense of hearing picks up sounds, the sense of taste

awakens our appetite for food, the sense of smell introduces us to the world of fragrances, and the sense of touch makes us aware of physical bodies and objects.

At this point we can ask certain questions,

I - Can each sense perceive everything that exists in this universe? Does the river a prisoner sees through a crack in the tower wall represent the entire river? Of course not He only sees a part of it. Similarly the sense of sight cannot perceive the whole spectrum of colours.

The fact that I cannot see an ant crawling three miles away from where I am does not rule out its existence. In the same way we are unable to see all the tiny bacteria in a glass of water.

Neither are we able to observe the electrons revolving in an atom, or the planets in their orbits, with the naked eye.

The vibrations of an ant's voice are outside the range of our auditory sense, which is from five to twenty thousand whatever is less than five vibrations or beyond twenty thousand is outside our hearing range. Nor can we pick up the scent of sugar that attracts ants and flies.

All this proves that we are only able to perceive a part of what is around us.

2 - Is it not possible that another world exists

between the world of colour and sound, which we are unable to observe because we are not equipped with the particular sense of

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Preception?

The prisoner in the tower may not have actually been able to see a beautiful garden between the river and the mountain, but this does not rule out its existence.

Again we have the example of someone who is born blind and is only able to learn by what he is told, that the sea is blue and the grass is green. Yet physically he is unable to see the Manifestation of these colours. In the same way, someone who is deaf, though he may learn about musical notes, he cannot actually hear them. But this does not mean that a blind or deaf person denies the existence of colour or sound.

The room where you are sitting may seem to be free of all sound though, in actual fact, it contains all the sounds that are being broadcast in the air from various radio stations. You are only unable to hear them because they are outside the range of your sense of hearing. They are vibrations which can only be picked up by a radio. And there are other things going on in the

atmosphere that humans are unable to perceive. For example, we cannot pick up the slight variations in atmospheric pressure though a barometer can do this. Likewise, a radar picks up mild tremors we cannot feel. So, there are many things which exist outside the range of our senses, but not perceiving them does not mean denying their presence.

3 - The next question we need to look at is whether our senses are all pervading and complete. Until recently it was thought that we only had five senses. Now a few more have been discovered, and it seems there can be more. Therefore, anything that can be increased, can be described as being incomplete.

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I may do things which *I* do not perceive, but am aware of For example, if I shut my eyes and open or close my hand I am aware that it is open or closed without actually seeing it.

And do we perceive our moods of happiness or unhappiness, weakness or sickness through our five senses? Of course not. We perceive them with an inner sense.

Similarly, I do not sway from left to right when I am walking because an inner sense infuses

me with a sense of balance. The same goes for a cyclist or a trapeze artist who performs amazing balancing acts.

This means that there must be an eighth sense - the sense of balance. And it has been discovered that God created this sense in the form of liquid matter in the inner ear.

Experiments carried out on rabbits show they lose their balance if this liquid is removed, and totter around as if they were drunk.

This third code therefore shows that we cannot deny the existence of factors beyond our sense,

4) The human imagination can only perceive that which the senses are able to perceive

We have already discussed the limitations of our senses: we cannot see every visible object with our eyes, etc. But God has granted us with the power of imagination to serve as a supplementary tool.

For example, I cannot actually see my home in London if I am in New York - though I can picture it in my mind's eye. The power of imagination therefore complements our sense of perception. But is this power limited - or is it fathomless? Can I imagine something I haven't

actually seen?

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Psychologists classify imagination in two categories: imagination based on reality, and creative imagination. The *example of* imagining my house in London when I am in New York illustrates the former. The latter is the fertile ground poets, writers, painters and other artists use to create from.

Look at what they have achieved. Have they produced anything not based on reality?

For example, did the sculptor who sculpted the statue of Venus depict someone in real life? No-he did not. However,

It is not a totally new image but a synthesis of several images. We can trace the end result back to various sources

and say that the sculptor used the best physical features from different women to produce his art form; the nose and mouth represent the perfect female form in real life and so on. As a result the end product though 'new' represents different parts already in existence.

In the case of the Winged Assyrian Bull, found

in a museum in Paris, the sculptor created a patchwork of a human face and the body of a bull to which he attached the wings of a bird. Again, the result is a new kind of image compiled of existing forms.

Poets illustrate their mental images through the use of metaphors, similes, metonyms and, sometimes, deliberate exaggeration. Various strands of their imagination come together to form the poetry they produce.

If we were to delve more deeply into such fantasies, However, we would find they have their limitations and that it is not possible to piece together components which are mutually incompatible. For example, we cannot say that a song smells like a rose or that the fragrance of a perfume is red. If you visualise such illustrations you will not be able to relate

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the image to anything concrete which is already in existence.

We are only able to see three dimensions with our eyes namely, length, breadth and height. We cannot imagine circle without a circumference any more than we can imagine triangle without angles. So how can we possibly

imagine the 'other world' and everything that is to be found in it? It is different from ours, and comparing it with this world is like comparing this world to a mother's womb. If we were able to make contact with a foetus and ask it about its idea of what our world is like, he or she would reply "The universe is the membrane and darkness which surround me." Even if the foetus were able to understand our description of the sun and the moon, day and night, land and sea, beautiful gardens and fields, etc., he or she would not be able to imagine them.

This is why Ibn Abbas, one of the companions of the Prophet, peace be upon him, said "Things of this world have no similarity to those in the next - except in name". This means that the wine and women in the next world will be different from the wine and women in this world.

Likewise, the fire of hell will not be like the fire we know, and the 'straight path will not resemble the bridges that span across rivers and valley in this world.

5) Even though the eye observes that a pencil in a glass of water looks as if it is broken, the mind is not deluded, in the same way that it realises the mirage in the desert is

nothing but sand When we see a conjurer take handkerchief out of his mouth and twenty rabbits from his sleeve, our mind being more accurate than our sight, alerts us to the fact that it is a trick. |

Does this mean that the mind can rule over matters that fall

beyond its scope?

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The mind rejects anything that does not fall within the framework of time and space. If a history teacher were to tell you 'that a war between the Arabs and the Persians took place neither before nor after the advent of Islam-yet it still took place, your mind would reject this statement as being completely contradictory. Or if a geography teacher told you that a country existed but was not situated on land or sea, or in the earth or the sky your mind would take this as a contradiction in terms.

So we can see that the faculties of the human mind are finite and refuse to accept anything infinite, which is outside the scope of time and space. Therefore issues concerning the problems of the soul, destiny, signs of God and His

attributes are all beyond the scope of the mind.

If we look at the concept of immortality for example, a believer is sure in his mind that immortality is an unshakable truth which has been conveyed to mankind through the divine message. But it is not possible to fit that concept into a framework of time and if we try to do that, we will fail and give up. In fact we may visualise a millennium of centuries but then what? Our minds get tired because they fail to reach a final point. And if they claim to have reached such a point it will contradict the very meaning of immortality.

The famous German philosopher Kant published a well-known work "Contradictions" , in which he said that the , human mind can only judge the physical world. But Muslim scholars had proved that before Kant's time and had, on the basis of mathematical theories, proved the falsity of *circuits vitiosus* (vicious circle).

Their simple evidence was as follows. If you draw two straight lines as two rays coming from one point, and you

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connect these two lines at equal distances, will the line connecting the two infinite ends be considered to be the ultimate line? If you say it is, it will be argued that it is between unending

points. If you say that it is infinite, people will reply that this cannot be so, as it is between two finite points. Therefore, it is a contradiction in terms.

It is clear that the human mind goes off balance when it tries to dominate the unlimited or infinite; it becomes the victim of impossible contradictions when it delves deeply into anything which is unlimited,

The human mind, therefore, cannot go deeply into the realm of metaphysics, as proved by Kant and stated by Muslim scholars earlier. And we can refer to this theme in the works of Islamic scholars, such as al-Ghazali in his books on scholastic theology.

6) Believers and non-believers alike feel worried and anxious in the face of a life crisis. At such times they find no consolation in their material surroundings and seek solace and comfort in a power beyond the material world, a power that filters through every aspect of our existence, bodies and souls. Examples of such crises are illness, the stress of taking important examinations and so on. Why then do people turn to God at such times?

From my own observation of two world wars, I noticed how people cling to religion: everyone,

from heads of governments to military generals, it seemed, became devout worshippers of God and impressed their subordinates to do the same.

I remember reading a story in a magazine during the war, a story related by a young paratrooper (parachutes were

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something new in those days). The young man had been born and brought up in a household where there was no mention of God and his family did not pray. He was educated in secular schools where religion was not included in the syllabus and so he grew up rather like a 'human animal', eating, sleeping and enjoying himself. But when he found himself descending from a great height and having almost landed before his parachute started to open, he found himself praying involuntarily, and from the bottom of his heart. The words "Oh Lord -Oh creator!" came to his lips instinctively. He was completely overwhelmed and could not explain how he had suddenly acquired this faith.

In, her memoirs, Stalin's daughter describes how she fumed to religion after many years of living forgetful of God. She marvels at this - but there is no reason to be in wonder,

because faith in the existence of God is something which is inborn in every individual. It is a natural instinct and an urge-rather like the sexual drive. So we can say that man is an animal with a religion.

This instinct may be overrun by physical desires, passion, ambition and craving for material comfort. However, when overcome by fear, danger or other crises, it rejects these desires and appears in its true and natural form. This is why we describe a non-believer as a *kafir*, which literally means 'one who hides'.

I was surprised to find the same concept by two eminent figures from backgrounds which were entirely different in every way, including the time and place they lived, their circumstances and the purpose for which they expressed this idea. One of them was the Muslim, Rabia al Adawiya, known for her piety, and the other was the famous French writer,

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Anatole France. While discussing his disbelief in an abandonment of faith, Anatole France declared "A person becomes a believer when he learns, as a result of a urine test that he has diabetes". (He made this statement before insulin was

discovered). On the other hand, Rabia al Adawiya replied in answer to a statement made by someone who claimed he had found a thousand proofs of God's existence, "One proof is enough". When asked what that proof was, she responded If you were walking alone in the desert and happened to fall in to a well from which you were unable to get out - what would you do?" The answer was "I'd call out - Oh God!". "Then that's your proof!" she declared.

Faith in God exists in the core of every human being. We Muslims know this fact, because God has informed us that *iman* is a natural characteristic that He has created in each of us. In Europe recently many people have seriously address the question of faith and have recognised its value.

Professor Durkheim, the famous Jewish French sociologist who had, like Freud, a negative influence on some minds for some time, has written a book to his credit, where he states that faith in the existence of God is a self-evident truth. No one can go through life without at some time reflecting on the existence of a Lord of this universe. But man, due to his short sightedness, may not find his way to God. He therefore worships certain objects which he imagines to be

God, or that he thinks will help take him near to Him. And yet when faced with a major crisis man returns to God and gives up all objects of worship. The polytheists of the Quarayshi tribe worshipped various idols, known as Hubal, Lat and Uzza. They were simple stones or statues. Hubal was made of cornelian, a semi-precious red

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Stone transported from the Syrian spa of Himmah. They described the statue as a great almighty god. It was transported on the back of a camel and en route fell off and its hand was Umashed. This hand was repalced by a gold hand. But how I^n the hand of God get broken! However, even after that incident, they continued to worship the statue. But even enough they worshipped it in times of peace, this was not the "case when they were at sea, and the sea became rough and danger was imminent. At times like this, they did not call out "Hubal!" but they called out to God. Even today during times of disaster and accidents you will notice that proud adversaries of God return to the fold of religion.

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Why Is this? Simply because *iman* is a natural instinct, and that, as we have already seen, leaves us with the most precise definition of man: "an animal with a religion".

Do you imagine that materialists, such as Karl Marx and Lenin, called out to production and manufacturing industries -those ideologies they had worshipped as God, when they were on their death beds? Or did they call out to God? You can be sure they prayed to God when drawing their last breath.

Pharaoh, who posed as being high and mighty, used to Declare "I am your supreme lord""But when he was about to drowned he said "I have believed in what the children of Israel have believed".

The sentiment of love expressed by lovers is yet further evidence of *iman* being an inborn characteristic of man. Love :js a micro-projection of *iman*; it is a kind of worship, In fact, when so many of the French turned away from religion they used the word 'worship' to mean 'love'. Arabs influenced by European ideas started to imitate them using phrases such as 'He loved and worshipped her" and "He loved her to the point

of worshipping her". You will find such expressions in Arabic short stories and novels. But this was only because worship is the natural manifestation of belief in God, and because there is a degree of similarity between love and faith. A lover obeys his beloved's wishes and desires. And this is exactly the same relationship as the one a believer has with God. A lover is never bothered if everyone around him is angry, as long as he is able to please the one he or she loves. That too is the case between a believer and God. What's more a lover fears the loved one to the extent of not wishing to make him or her angry, and has nothing but praise for whatever the beloved says or does. This is just the same way that a believer accepts what God has ordained. So we can see that love passionate love, is a testimony to the fact that faith is inborn.

Inadequacy of words

The above statement does not purport to equate the love of God with the sentiments of passionate love between human beings. We simply need to take into account that a person in a passionate relationship obeys the beloved and is afraid of him or her, and admires and praises whatever the loved one does being able to endure other people's anger in order to please *the* loved one. But he does this because it fulfills a desire. In

fact, we express our love for our own self through the love we have for our lover.

We can look at the example of one of the most famous lovers in Arabic history, Laila. Let us imagine that she was afflicted with leprosy and that the disease had disfigured her face. Would her lover Quais have approached and made advances to seeing her in this state? He wouldn't even have given her a second glance - and would have abandoned her.

This is the difference between love of mortals and love of God.

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Although the two forms are entirely different from each other, the same word is used to denote both because the human language lacks a better expression, with a wider scope and range -of meaning, which would include the spiritual aspects of love. We use the same word 'love' to denote a variety of meanings from love of the countryside and history to love of rice and curry! A father loves his son. Prince Charming loves Cinderella and the believer loves God. Each one of these loves differs from the other.

With regard to this concept of 'inadequacy of words' we should also include the word 'beauty', which is used to denote so many meanings. The

same applies to the words 'hearer' and 'seer' with reference to God being the Hearer and Seer and a human being a hearer and seer. Referring to a human being, we mean that that person is neither deaf nor blind. But Divine Bright and Hearing is not like that of mortals, because God is unlike anything in creation. Likewise, nothing in creation is similar to Him.

All the Divine attributes are not to be compared to the faculties of mortals.

7) Man recognises intuitively that the material world is {not the foe-all and end-all of existence and that there is an unseen spiritual world beyond the physical world.

Man is only able to catch glimpses of the unseen world when he realises that material pleasures are limited and, after a certain point, they lose their attraction and become a source of boredom and monotony.

When a poor man sees the material possessions of a rich man, he feels that the wealthy man has achieved the ultimate in life. However, when the poor man succeeds in acquiring such

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possessions he loses interest in them. Likewise, a lover who longs to meet his girlfriend, and spends

sleepless nights dreaming about being with her believing that all the pleasures of life will be encompassed by his love, is disappointed when he finally marries the girl. The feeling of ecstasy disappears, and within two years the whole affair may be a thing of the past. Another example is of a man who falls ill and gets very depressed, imagining that all the pleasures of life depend on his recovery to health. But once he is well he not only forgets those unhappy days, but he takes his health for granted too. And how about the young artist who seeks fame and popularity, and is overwhelmed with joy when he hears his name being broadcast, or sees his picture in a paper. Yet once he is recognised and established, the attraction for fame loses its charm and becomes part of his everyday life.

By the same token we may be moved by a romantic song, which brings up intense feelings of love, stirring our hearts and kindling the fire of our imagination, sending us into raptures. A wellwritten story can have the same effect, carrying us away from reality into a world of fantasy, full of poetry and romance, But at the end of the story we are jolted back to reality, with a sense of longing. We yearn to return to that fantasy world - in vain.

During moments of contemplation our souls may rise to sublime heights, where this material world appears trivial and unworthy. The joy of this experience will far surpass the Joy *of a* starving person finding food, the lover meeting his loved one or the pleasure and satisfaction a poor man when he finally acquires wealth and influence,

'This self is always eager to rise to sublime heights, to an unknown world, the identity of - which can only be acquired

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Through the few glimpses we catch of it, as mentioned previously. But it is through such experiences that man realises how trivial and limited material pleasures are, compared with spiritual pleasures. As a consequence, he becomes convinced, intuitively rather than intellectually, that this material life is not the ultimate goal and that there is beyond doubt another world beyond this. This is the world which our souls yearn for and try to reach, but the human body becomes an obstacle and hampers its efforts. These experiences, however, give us a psychological proof of the existence of another world.

8) Belief in another world is a natural consequence to

the, belief in the existence of God.

The above statement can be further explained by stating that the Lord of this universe is fair, and that anyone who is just will not allow for injustice. He will not let the oppressive person go unpunished, nor will he deny justice to anyone who *has* suffered unfairly.

We find many people in this world who live and die as oppressors without ever being punished. We can also see people who are victim of unfair treatment throughout their lives. But how can this happen if God exists and is just? It only proves that there is a life after this worldly life where the doer of evil will be punished and the doer of good rewarded.

The story does not finish with the end of this world- If a feature film were to be shown on television and were to be stopped *abruptly, with the* viewers being told that the *film* ended at that point, they would most certainly complain and want to know what was going on. "What happened to the hero?" "What happened to the rest of the film?" would be some of the questions they would ask. These questions would

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crop up because they would expect the script writer to give a full account of the story. But if this is how

people would react to a story on life in this world, can any intelligent person accept the statement that life ends with death? How could it *be* possible? It therefore becomes clear to the human mind that there must be a Lord of this universe and a life hereafter, That unknown world that we catch glimpses of when we hear romantic music or read a moving story, or experience in moments of intuition, is not 'the world of ideas' as depicted by Plato. It is a world created by the Lord of all creation; a world offering everlasting pleasures, and not the ephemeral pleasure of this world which are but a mere flavour of what is to come And what's more, we will never get used to these eternal pleasures. They will never lose their beauty and become ordinary - as is the case with the pleasure of this world,

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CHAPTERV

IMAN (FAITH)

The issue of iman (faith) consists of four factors:

The Existence of God without Him being created

God is Lord of the worlds

He is the Owner of the worlds

He is the Only Lord and no one else is to be worshipped.

The Existence of God without Him being created

As stated in the previous chapter under code 6, belief in God is a self-evident truth which we can perceive intuitively. It does not need proof, although in fact evidence can be found wherever we look. Fifty years ago. a Syrian scholar, Sahaikh Jamaluddin al Qasimi, published a book on this subject, entitled "Proofs of the Oneness of God". I would also like to mention another book, "God Manifest in the Age of Science", written by thirty different and well established scientists. Another relevant book is "Man Does not Stand Alone". These books will convince the reader that a true scientist, just

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as much as a layman, has to be a believer. The tendency for atheism, a lack of respect and contempt for God is prevalent among ill-informed scientists, who have deprived themselves of the characteristics of inborn faith and have consequently fallen into the abyss of disbelief,

The books referred to contain many valuable discourses by reputable scholars, such as Frank Alien, world famous biologist, Robert Morris Budge, inventor of radar, John Cleveland Kawthron, professor of Chemistry and John Herbert Blonde, Professor of physics, to name but a few. It is worth

mentioning here that Professor Frank Alien disproved the theory of the pre-existence or timelessness of the universe, as was propagated by the Greek philosophers. Science has now established that everything has a time limit, Without elaborating on the evidence of the existence of God which has been expounded by scholars throughout the ages, I would like to quote just one verse from the many verses in the Holy Quran, which are clear and irrefutable proofs. This verse sums up this question briefly and concisely:

And on earth there are signs (of God's existence) visible to those who are endowed with inner certainty, just as (there are signs thereof) within your own selves. Can you not, then see? (51: 20-21).

This must be sufficient proof for both scholars and laymen alike. Deep in our hearts we are all convinced of the existence of God. As we saw in the previous chapter, we call on Him *in* times of crisis or great difficulty; our inborn faith urges us to seek His help at such times. What's more, if we look around we can see ample proof of His existence. The inner self is convinced by intuition and the intellect by logical proof.

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So why would anyone deny God's

existence? Isn't that rather like a person who, even though his clothes are soaking wet, denies having been anywhere near water?

Anyone denying His existence does so because: They have forgotten God and so God made them forget themselves. (9:67).

People are so absorbed with their own lives that they do not want to spend any time whatsoever in reflection and meditation. They keep themselves busy doing any job that comes their way, or in idle chat - or reading rubbish. The self becomes their biggest enemy and they live as if life is a burden they want to unload.

Most people, as you have probably noticed, are engrossed by the pleasures of life. They eat, drink, sleep and go about their daily work through which they earn material goods for themselves and their families. It is as if they were stuck in a rut. There is hardly any difference between their past and present, and they have hardly anything to look forward to in the future which might be different from their present way of life.

But that is not the case with a believer who puts his faith into practice. No practising Muslim, for example, can resign himself to a monotonous routine life. On the contrary, such a person has to think and reflect and wonder

"Where did I come from? Where will I go from here? Where does my life begin and end?" He realises that life is not a span of time between the two points of birth and death. He knows that he existed before birth, in his mother's womb, and prior to that he was just a drop of sperm which was created from the blood that ran through his y father's body. His father's blood was formed from the food he ate, and this food was prepared from the fruits of the earth. So

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a long chain of unknown factors led to his birth. How then could he create himself through his intellect and will power when, at a certain time, he existed without either?

A child is unaware of himself until the age of four. We are unable to remember our birth or the days we spent in our mother's womb. It is clear that man existed even before he was aware of himself, and it is absurd to say that man is his own creator. .

The questions we put to atheists and heretics should therefore be "Did you create yourself through your own will and intellect? Did you force yourself into your mother's womb? Did you choose your own mother? Was it you who fetched

the midwife to attend to your delivery? Were you then created from nothingness and without a creator?" Of course this is impossible.

Was man created by those things which were in existence before him, such as the mountains, the sun and the stars?

The French philosopher Descartes evolved the theory of doubt. He doubted everything, even his own self, yet when he thought of it he could have no doubt of its existence. And since there is no doubt without a doubter he made the famous statement "I think, therefore I exist". Of course he existed, but who brought him into that existence? It goes without saying that material objects are inanimate and devoid of the power of reasoning. But can an irrational being create a rational being? How could a person who does not possess something give it to others? This was the stand taken by the eminent Prophet Abraham, peace be upon him, against his father. His father was a sculptor who used to carve idols of gods out of stone. These idols, made by human hands, were worshipped by his people.

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Iman (*Faith*)

Abraham was puzzled and began to question himself asking "How could I make a god

and then pray to him and ask him to grant me what I want? My reasoning cant accept that!"
Then he began to think and to enquire. When he saw stars he mistook them for gods because they were not formed from the earth, like the stone from which the idols had been carved. But then when he saw the moon rising in the sky and giving more light than the stars, he considered the moon to be his god. But when the moon disappeared and the sun rose and shone in full blaze, he couldn't help but worship the sun as his god. Alas,

The existence of this god was also short-lived. How could a god abandon his kingdom and vanish out of sight? So there must be a supreme God beyond all these inanimate beings. It is He Who has created me and all these beings.

The above argument is dealt with very clearly in the Holy Quran:

Or were they created out of naught? Or are they creators? (52:36).

This verse, a proof of Divine eloquence must come as a great blow to the rationalist who denies the existence of God gp) by clinging on to the power of intellect as the source of all action.

When we grew up and became mature we

asked "What is nature?" In Arabic, etymologically, the word means 'something which is made natural.' Who then, made it natural? Many unbelievers hold that "nature is coincidence - the law of possibilities". We say that this description of nature can be compared to the story of two men who lost their way in the desert and came across a palace. It was an excellent example of architecture, furnished with exotic carpets, clocks,

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chandeliers and so on. The two men, spellbound by the sight of it, had the following conversation:

- First Man: Somebody must have built this palace and furnished it.**
- Second Man: What conservative and oldfashioned comment! This whole place is the work of nature.**
- First Man: How could nature have built such a palace?**
- Second Man: Well, the stones and rubbish that were originally here were formed into walls and partitions as a result of floods, winds and climatic change.**
- First Man: But what about the carpets?**

- Second Man: Oh - They were made from the wool that fell off sheep and dyed by mixtures of coloured metals. Then the wool was interwoven and the end product is these carpets.

- First Man: How about the clocks?

- Second Man: Due to certain climatic conditions, iron corroded and formed small round and flat pieces which became clocks.

Wouldn't you think someone giving such answers was crazy?

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Is it a matter of sheer coincidence that the invisible cells in human liver carry out extremely difficult functions? They convert excess sugar in the blood into glycogen, which is later turned into glucose as and when required. These cells also produce bile, and maintain the cholesterol level in the blood, as well as producing red corpuscles and performing several other functions.

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iman (Faith)

Is it also just coincidence that the human tongue has nine thousand small buds on it which enable us to

enjoy the sense of taste? The human ear has one hundred thousand cells that carry out the function of hearing, and the human eye has one hundred and thirty million cells which pick up rays of light.

Furthermore, consider the wonders and mysteries of the earth itself. The air that blows round it, the creatures living on it and the wonderful shapes of snowflakes. What beauty and precision! And many of the discoveries have only recently come to our knowledge.

Look at the minerals found on earth and the flora and fauna; the vast deserts, oceans, high mountains and deep valleys. Compared with the sun, you will find the earth is a very small and negligible entity. As for the sun, it too is like a particle of sand when compared with other stars, even though it is one million times bigger than the earth.

In terms of speed of light, the sun is only eight minutes away from the earth, the speed of light being three hundred thousand kilometres per second. So, in eight minutes light travels more than the two million kilometres that separate the sun from the earth.

And what about the stars whose light reaches us in a duration of a million light years, very light year being equal to ten thousand billion kilometres.? Astronomers have little information about these stars, including the galaxy , apart from the fact it is a spot of illumination containing many stars which we human beings know nothing about. Only God knows. These stars whose size is beyond the scope of our imagination move at great speed and never bump into each other. How can that be explained?

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I once read an article by an astronomer who stated that the possibility of stars colliding is as slight as that of six bees Colliding if they were flying in the earth's atmosphere. The vastness of this atmosphere is for the bees similar to the space for the stars.

The tremendous space in its entirety exists in the midst of a huge globe - the sky. This globe has a definite body. It is neither air nor atmosphere, nor the imaginary line that some scholars and commentators of the Holy Quran claim exists between the stars as a line of orbit. This globe surrounds the space containing all the stars, great and small. And, as God Almighty says in the Holy Quran:

We have set up the sky, a roof well guarded.

(21: 32)

Beyond this space is yet another space, the vastness of which is known only to God. It may be like the space in this globe, or even bigger. It is surrounded by another globe, *still* larger, beyond which may be a third space and a third globe, larger in size, then a fourth space with a fourth globe and a fifth, sixth and seventh space, each surrounded by a globe Then there are huge and magnificent celestial bodies: The Throne, the Seat of Power and all the creation that God has informed us about.

But the most extraordinary wonder is the atom. It represents in minuscule form, all that exists in the space. And the human mind is unable to perceive its intricacies in just the same way as it cannot imagine the vastness and enormity of the space. ,

All this is indomitable proof , therefore, of the fact that God exists.

In the past, scientists and philosophers described the

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As "the unique gem that cannot be disintegrated".

It cannot be seen. except through an electronic

microscope. According to scientists, the atom is so small that if you were to arrange forty ; million atoms side by side, their total length would be no more than one centimetre.

In the middle of every atom is a space containing the Nucleus around which small bodies known as electrons are in orbit, just like planets in spaces. This nucleus, when compared to the atom, is like a grain of wheat compared to a huge palace.

And a nucleus by itself weighs more than one thousand eight hundred electrons.

Is all that an act of sheer coincidence?

All the writings based on high-flown theories regarding 'Nature', 'Laws of Coincidence', etc. are, to say the least, illusive and illogical. But to the pleasure of sincere believers such words are no longer valid in scientific circles and are

usually only used by pseudoscientists.

God, Lord of the Worlds

The second point regarding faith in God is to believe that *he* alone created everything - plants, animals, planets and all that we can see as well as all that exists in the unseen. He has created all this from nothingness, and what's more, has laid down

marvellous rules and regulation for everything. Very few of them have been discovered in the realms of physics, chemistry, medicine and astronomy. Only God possesses knowledge of all the major and minor aspects of everything in existence.

It is He who knows the number of leaves on every tree and the shape of each leaf and its position. He knows how many insects exist in this world, their length, breadth and each part of
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their anatomy. He alone knows how many electrons, mobile and immobile, there are in an atom, and the mutations and permutations, progress and change which take place in them. All this knowledge is recorded in a book in His custody.

God is the Lord of all the worlds. It is He Who has brought them into existence, and it is He Who protects them changing them from one condition to another. And it is He Who has placed the guidance for wise and intelligent people in every particle.

This second issue regarding faith in God is essential and inevitable. But is it enough for someone to simply profess faith in this concept in

order to become a believer? If someone tells you that God is the Creator and the Lord, does this mean he is a believer? Of course not. It is not enough to declare faith, as most nations in the past have done. Even the unbelievers of the Qurayshi tribe professed faith. This was the tribe whom the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, was sent to in order to expose the falsehood of their belief in polytheism and to make them believe that the creed they believed in was inferior and unacceptable. The Prophet even had to wage wars against them for till's cause. Even satan (Iblis), the evilest of all creatures, did not deny the fact that God was his Lord: (Iblis) said "Oh my Lord! Because thou hast send me astray" (15:39) and Iblis said "Oh my Lord! Reprieve me (15:36).

God Is the Lord of the Universe

The third issue concerns God being the Lord of the universe. He has the absolute right of disposal in it Just like the rights of a property owner. He bestows life and deals

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death., Can you protect yourself from death? And can you grant yourself immortality in this world? It is He Who causes illness and gives

health. Is it possible, therefore, for you to heal a person whom God has deemed incurable? God alone bestows wealth and causes poverty. It is He who brings about floods and droughts.

There, were once terrible floods in Italy that devastated cities. During the same period we heard about frightening droughts in parts of India; crops dried out, cattle died, and water was so scarce it had to be rationed.

So who causes water to overflow in one area and to dry out totally in another? Who bestows daughters on some couples and sons on others? and can anyone who has been bestowed with a girl turn her into a boy? Can a sterile woman conceive a child?

It is He Who causes people to die when they are infants and

grants longevity to others who live to a ripe old age. He causes cold spells and snowfalls on some countries, and heat

waves and earthquakes in others.

And man remains helpless amidst all these phenomena.

The Lord to Be Worshipped

As; we said before, most people agree that God is the Lord of the universe and the Absolute Power. But does this suffice for a person to be a believer?

**Of course not. There is yet another issue,
the fourth, which concerns this question of faith:
that only God is to be worshipped-**

**If you really believe that God exists and
that He is the Lord of all the Worlds and the Lord
of Sovereignty, you should not**

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**worship anyone except Him. This means that you
should *not* associate anyone else with Him in any
form of worship. The chapter in the Holy Quran
entitled *Annaas* (Mankind) is a clear refutation to
those who do not accept the Oneness of God, even
though they believe in His existence, and that He
is Lord of all Dominions. I have arrived at a
conclusion regarding this chapter, which, as far as
I know, no other commentator has reached. I hope
my opinion is correct. Godalmighty says:**

Say, I seek refuge with the Lord and

Cherisher of

Mankind, the God (or Judge) of mankind. (1 14).

**Why has the word 'mankind' been repeated in these
verses**

**when the possessive pronoun 'their' could easily
have been substituted?**

**I believe - though God knows best - that there
are three separate but interconnected issues here.**

Namely, Our Lord is the Lord of mankind; He is their creator; and He is their Protector: Our Lord is the Ruler of mankind. In other words, He is Absolute Disposer of their affairs. And our Lord is The God of mankind, which means that He alone is to be worshipped. No partner should be set up to be worshipped as an equal to Him. One has to either totally accept or totally reject these three issues.

How could you differentiate between three identical issues accepting some while rejecting the others? All three are essential and inseparable.

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CHAPTER VI

THE ONENESS OF GOD

Faith in God as Lord of the Universe and of all dominions,

Is a concept that comes from the heart and permeates our whole being. But Faith in God as the one and only Lord is not confined to the act of faith alone. It influences all our behaviour and conduct and demands acts of worship to God and God alone. Anyone refraining from such worship or worshipping anything else as a 'partner* to God is not considered to be a believer, even though he may profess true belief in God as the Lord of all Creations and Dominions. So how can

we define the concept of worship of God?.

Normally we understand worship as remembrance of God, performance of prayers, fasting and recitation of the Holy Quran, plus any other actions which take us nearer to Him. While this definition is no doubt correct, worship is not limited to these actions alone.

Any useful action which is not prohibited by the Divine Law and is performed by a believer with the intention of seeking God's pleasure, is worship.

We eat so that we can keep ourselves fit in order to serve

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Him, therefore eating is a form of worship. A man gets married to ensure an honourable life for himself and his wife; therefore his marriage is an act of worship - as is the earning of money to spend on his family. Gaining knowledge, and good qualifications are also forms of worship.

The same goes for the household chores a housewife does and the love and care she gives her husband.

Every action, provided it is within the Divine Law and is performed with the intention of seeking God's pleasure, is worship. Perhaps it is to convey this meaning that He says in the Holy Quran:

I have not created jinns and men to any end other than they may worship me.(51:56).

The Spirit of Worship

Worship has two aspects, spiritual and physical. The spiritual aspect concerns our faith, which serves as both a motive and a guide. The physical aspect applies to the movement of our bodies. Prayer, for example, involves speech and movement, reciting and reading, as well as standing, sitting and kneeling. But all these actions are empty of meaning and spirit, unless they are motivated by the force of true faith in the oneness of God.

Basis for the Oneness of Divinity

The belief that God alone is the source of all good and evil, is the basis for the oneness of Divinity. It may be explained further by stating that God is the Creator of everything. As we said previously, he has created these worlds causing all kinds of creatures and things to flourish in them. He has endowed us with the power of intellect, so that we ma

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think and contemplate about His entire creation.

But when we look at the sky, the earth and the various elements of nature, we may find that some

of these forces are at odds with each other. For example, fire can burn a dry tree and water can extinguish the fire. If a mosquito stings someone, that person may contract malaria, and the bark of the cinchona tree can cure his fever.

We also find that God has combined harmful substances in order to make useful products. Table salt, for example, is made up of two harmful substances, chlorine and sodium. By mixing them together in certain quantities, table salt, which we require for our food, is produced.

We can also observe the following points.

1- Certain sets of rules and methods govern the interaction,

fusion and merging of various substances. These principles and precepts laid down by God are constant and do not change. We tend to describe them as laws of nature.

2- These laws of nature and relationships between material

things are not always visible to us, as is the reaction between fire and wood and fire and water. Indeed, many of these interactions are minute - deep, and hidden from our sight. God has created a cure for every illness in this world, but those cures are not visible or intelligible and have not been handed to us as 'ready-made' products. On the contrary, in His supreme Wisdom, God has hidden these cures in

places and situations where we can hardly imagine them to be. For example. penicillin is found in putrid mould which has the appearance of deadly poison. The most fragrant perfumes, and paints of dazzling colours are to be found in tar, which is the most foul smelling and ugly looking material.

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These sources are not within easy reach.

Our Lord has

mixed them, which means that the most effective and sought after material may exist in a very complicated form, mixed up with many other substances, making it a mammoth task to extract it.

When we read about Madame Curie we learn about tremendous patience. She had to carry out a long series of tests and experiments over several years in order to extract a gram of radium from a huge mass of materials! Every student should read the book about Madame Curie and her husband entitled "The Immortal Student" in order to understand the amount of patience and perseverance needed to obtain knowledge.

The biographies written by Islamic scholars in the early ages also describe extensively the patience, perseverance and sincerity required to

seek knowledge.

3- So far we know very little about the laws and regulations God laid down. What we have discovered so far is only a drop in the ocean. We have categorised this limited knowledge into what *we* call science - including biology, chemistry, physics, physiology, medical sciences, etc. Each of these branches of science has specialists who delve into the depths of their particular area in order to gain more knowledge about the laws set down by our Lord.

4 - Some things in our universe serve us while others are harmful and these, we find, can be divided into two categories. Some events can be attributed to an obvious reason. For example, we know that we will die if we take poison. We have gained that knowledge through the application of the laws of nature, which have been incorporated in our sciences. But the

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Second type of useful or harmful occurrence or substance may not seem apparent and may not be based on any known law of nature. An example of this would be of a physically fit person, who enjoys good health, suddenly dying of a heart attack for no obvious reason. Both these phenomena are caused by God.

5- God has created in us intrinsic qualities of love for what is good and dislike for what is bad. This is why man does all he can in order to achieve what is good and beneficial to him and tries his best to avoid what is harmful and evil.

In this context, he seeks help from every possible source of power and strength. Some of these sources are permitted by religion, however, while others are not. So, which means are permitted by religion and which are not?

Imagine that your child is unwell. In this situation you normally send for a doctor and ask him to treat your child. He may do so and write out a prescription. This is a lawful means you have made use of, in order to cure your child and it is permitted by God. You sought the help of a 'scientist' who has ,learnt the laws of nature laid down by God in the area of medicine. But if you had sent for a witch doctor to treat your child .you would have been seeking help through means which are outside the Divine Law. In other words, the treatment your child would be given would not be based on knowledge of the laws of nature. On the contrary, they would employ certain unseen forces with which they

claim to have contact, but the *existence of* which has not been proved either by physical or traditional evidence, such as evidence given in the Holy Quran or in the Traditions of the Prophet, may peace and blessings be upon him.

If your doctor died, and you were to visit his grave begging

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him to examine your child and make out a prescription for him, you would still be using a forbidden means because your doctor would no longer be in a position to answer your request. He would not be able to visit your child, let alone write out a prescription for him! If it turned out that all the doctors you saw were unable to help,

and the medicines they prescribed were useless, then it would be perfectly acceptable to seek a cure through prayer, charity or by asking a pious man to pray to God for help. But it is unacceptable to stand on a man's grave and seek his help.

It is lawful for someone to try to get well by taking the medicine the doctor has prescribed, but that medicine should not be used as a charm, being hung round the patient's neck - or dissolved in water in the belief that that water will make him well. It is not within the Divine Law, either, for you to seek help from anything that God has not made an obvious means of help.

A sterile woman wishing to conceive is within her rights to consult a doctor and take medicine based on scientific principles. But it would not be in order for her to behave like some women in certain countries, who believe that if a woman places her hand on the window of a saint's tomb she will become fertile. In other parts of the world there are even stranger superstitions in existence,

So, as we see from these examples, it is perfectly acceptable to consult specialists who have studied the laws of nature, and to go through normal means in order to achieve what is

beneficial. However, we should always remember that God alone and none other bestows good, and that it is against our faith to seek the help of unseen forces, which are not supported by practical science, or confirmed by the Holy Quran
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or the Traditions of the Prophet, peace be upon him.

God Is the Arbiter of What Is Lawful and What Is Forbidden

So, we benefit in a worldly way from the application of the laws of nature, and God has given us the power of intellect to discover them. However, He has not granted us the power to discover what is beyond these laws, nor has he given us the power to bring into this world the benefits of the next. So we function within the material confines given to us, trying to work for what is good and reject what is bad, as much as possible. We do not claim good or bad for ourselves in the other world.

God has ordained that if we do our duty in this world, we shall be amply rewarded with all that is good in the life to come. And if we choose to indulge in what is outside the confines of Divine law, then we will suffer and be in anguish

in the next world.

This principle forms the basis for the concept of what is acceptable and what is unacceptable, and for reward and punishment. No one else can tell us what is lawful and what is forbidden, nor can anyone make what is forbidden lawful, or, by the same token, forbid anything which has not been forbidden by God. Whoever gives anyone but Him the right to decide what is within or outside the confines of Divine law will either be worshipping someone other than God, or setting up partners in worship with Him. This is described as *shirk*, (associationism) in the Holy Quran:

The worshippers of false gods say "If God has so willed *we* should not have worshipped aught but Him neither we nor our fathers - nor should we have prescribed

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prohibitions other than His". (16:36)

Love and Fear of God

We all have feelings of love, hatred, likes and dislikes.

Perhaps we love anything that is good. We may love beautiful scenery, or many may love a woman to the extent of worshipping her. But all

these aspects of love are bound by limits and constraints, like any other forms of human love.

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We become attached to the good feeling we derive from anything we love, or from the pleasure and joy we feel by being close to the person we love. But this love may not continue in the same degree of intensity; in fact it may even turn to dislike if some misfortune happens to the person or object of love, or if the person we love becomes disfigured in an accident, or the food we love goes bad, or if climatic conditions change the beauty of natural scenery.

But the love a believer has for God is absolute. It is not subjected to any constraints or limitations. In fact, the love we have for the people and objects in this world is, in reality, our love for God through his creations, since it is He who has created and placed at our disposal all that we can make use of, or enjoy the sense of seeing or touching.]

At the same time, many things in creation are a source of fear for us. A wild beast, deadly poison or a ruthless tyrant may frighten us out of our wits. But such fear is bound by the extent of danger we visualise, or that may result from the source of our fear. When the danger has passed,

our fear vanishes. But we do not check or restrain our fear of God. That fear is unlimited.

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The way of realizing the Oneness of God is based on both the love and fear of Him. And it is love and fear that form the essence of worship. However, it must be pointed out that love of God does not mean you write poetry to Him or express physical love for him. And fear of God should not cause a sense of panic or anxiety, making us lose our sense of mental balance. We should, instead, induce the love of God through obedience to him within us. We therefore resist the craving of the heart, and keep away from the temptations of the devil. It should make us lead a life of purity in both conduct and character, in a way that is acceptable to God. It must, above all, encourage us to proceed on the path shown by our Prophet, may peace and plessings be upon him.

The Holy Quran states:

Say (Oh Prophet), if you love God, follow me! God will love you and forgive your sins. (3:31)

Thus the true measures of love and fear, as the example set by the Prophet, are:

- Adherence to the path of guidance and abstinence from all that has been forbidden;

- Preference for the reward in the next world over the pleasures of sin in this world.

However, submission to God should not be thought of as being similar to the way we obey some human beings, for the following reasons.

We obey our Prophet because God ordained us to do so, while we obey other people for reasons of instinct or fear of

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what the consequences will be if we disobey. For example a nation obeys its ruler, children comply with their parents' wishes, a wife submits to her husband's wishes, and, provided that what he is ordered to do does not hurt him, a person may obey someone who has been good to him, or we may suddenly feel compelled to obey someone to protect ourselves from harm or injury.

All such acts of obedience, except obedience to the

Prophet, which is in fact compliance to God's will, are conditional. In other words, they are not like the complete and unlimited obedience we show to God. For instance, we may have to carry out

duties and activities in our everyday lives which we do not enjoy. In fact, even though we may or may not comprehend His supreme wisdom in all that he wills us to do our obedience of Him is the fruit and proof of our sincere love for Him.

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Verses in the Holy Quran Concerning the Attributes of God

I have, so far, avoided the discussion of problems concerning differences in scholastic theology or among theologians on this subject. But there is one issue - namely, the verses of the Holy Quran referring to the attributes of God, which have been subject to many debates and wide difference of opinion. It is a subject deserving attention, and I would therefore like to inform readers of the issues involved.

Our Almighty Lord has, in the Holy Quran, described Himself with words which are normally used in everyday language to express human feelings and activities. Needless to say, there is nothing equal to God, Who, as the Creator and Sustainer, is above all comparison with any of the creations.

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These words, therefore, when they occur in the

context of Divine attributes, cannot be interpreted to mean the same as when used in the context of human beings.

We may, for instance, say that such and such a person is well-informed and that another person is knowledgeable. We may also say of God that He is well-informed and knowledgeable, but the processes by which a human being learns and perceives are not the same as those pertaining to God. We say, for example "The teacher seated himself at his Desk". The verb 'to seat' also occurs in the Holy Quran:

Verily, your Sustainer is God, Who created the heavens and the earth *in* six days and is seated on the throne of his Almightyness.(7:54)

In this verse the verb 'to seat' has been used to convey the meaning of 'establish'. We know the lexical meaning of 'establish' (in Arabic the verb *ista^ʿva* is used in both instances), nevertheless, we apply it to a teacher with a completely different meaning from that in the quoted verse. Theologians are unanimous in their agreement with regard to the denotation of the verses dealing with the attributes of God, and that these are His words. If He had said"... and is

established ...", no one could ask "What could 'is established' be?" But opinions vary greatly with regard to the purpose and Intention of these attributes and as to whether they are real or metaphorical. The question is whether they can be subjected to interpretation and clarification or not. One school of thought took the stand that these verses can be interpreted and clarified, and agreed with the scholars of the science of rhetoric, who, by and large, hold the view that words are essentially to be used in the meanings they signify. There is

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no doubt that the Arabic language contained the language of the Holy Quran before it was revealed. These words were used to denote ordinary and everyday meanings. But as they are not adequate enough even to express human emotions and feelings, what can we possibly say about their inadequacy to express Divine attributes?

Let us consider, for example, the words at our disposal to express beauty. We know that beauty has several forms and entities, such as the beauty of nature, a poem, a building or the dazzling beauty of a young girl. When we want to express

anything regarding beauty, we are forced to bring in the words 'beauty' or 'beautiful', as our linguistic repertoire is rather limited. Thus human language falls short of expressions to convey the concept of beauty - and the same applies to the concept of love. Think of all the different manifestations of love - and the words at our disposal to describe or discuss them.

The vocabulary of any language is considered to be a vehicle to convey the thoughts, feelings, actions, emotions, etc. which pertain to life in this world. The vocabulary in the Holy Quran also draws from this repertoire of mundane meanings, meanings concerning our material existence in this world, or (example, the words referring to God concerning some of His actions, like 'He sat. He came. He deceived. He was cunning He forgot.' etc. It would be a contradiction in terms to say that these words in the Holy Quran are not to be understood in their ordinary, everyday meaning and that they have occurred as metaphorical expressions.

Among those who reject the theory of metaphorical usage of such words in the Holy Quran is the famous scholar, Ibn Taymiyya. He is of the opinion that metaphorical interpretation

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Is also man-made and will therefore also reflect mundane

I find, after studying these verses, that they fail into three categories:

1- Verses which are in the nature of a statement of fact by God, as in:

The Most Gracious established on the throne of His almightiness. (20:5)

We do not interpret this verse either by denying the act of being 'established' or by saying that the Almighty 'established or seated' Himself on the throne, in the same way as a person would sit on a chair. Such a statement would amount to a comparison between the Lord and His creation. But we believe that it is the Word of God and that the human intellect cannot *grasp* the inner meaning of such a statement.

We quoted other situations earlier, in which the human intellect remains helpless.

2 - Verses containing 'extended metaphors' - a suggestion of likeness or analogy - which is a recognised form of stylistic expression. For example, Abu Tammam, the famous Arab poet says:

Ninety thousand lions of the forest have become ripened... (i.e., they are all set to fight)

This is like the ripening of figs and grapes.

This mode of expression can be noticed in several verses of the Holy Quran:

They have forgotten God, and so He is oblivious of

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them. (9:67)

The words 'to be oblivious' in this verse are not to be taken in their lexical meaning regarding us human beings, but as an extended metaphor, with reference to the Almighty, Who is never oblivious of anything, which is clearly stated in the following verse:

And thy Lord was never forgetful. (19:64)

As to the following verse: And He is with you wherever you may be. And God is Seer of whatsoever ye do (57:4)

Commentators all agree that it is to be understood in the sense of the Omniscience of. God. He is aware of your existence without being physically with you.

And:

We shall dispose of you, Oh you two dependents (man and jinn) (55:3 1)

And they (the disbelievers) schemed, and God schemed (against them): and God is the best

of Schemers. (3:54)

Lo! The hypocrites seek to beguile God, but it is He Who beguileth them. When They stand up to worship, they perform it languidly and to be seen of men, and are mindful of God but little.

(4:142)

All such verses have Divine connotations, and therefore should not be understood in their literal and ordinary meanings.

3 Verses, the meanings of which are made clear by other verses:

And the Jews say "God's hand is shackled!" It is their

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own hands that are shackled and rejected (by God) because

of this their assertion. Nay, but wide are His hands stretched

out. He dispenses (bounty) as He wills. (5:64)

The above verse can be understood by perusing another

verse form a

different chapter.

Make not thy hand tied (like a niggard's) to thy neck, nor stretch it forth to its utmost reach. (17:20)

It is evident that the expression regarding the stretching of hands has been used here metaphorically, in order to indicate generosity and bounty, and we should therefore not assume that God has two hands, as we do.

In fact the words 'two hands' which come up in the Holy

Quran in verses referring to the hand of mercy of God, or His punishment, are not to be taken in their literal sense.

The Self-Explanatory and Allegorical Verses of the Holy Quran

God the Almighty has revealed verses in the Holy Quran that are self-explanatory - messages that are clear in themselves, and they are the essence of the Divine Writ. There are also verses that are expressed figuratively, where the meaning is implied metaphorically and not directly. The verses referring to the Divine Attributes occur in this latter category, namely, allegorically.

. *Dua* (invocation) is the most remarkable form of exaltation, and in Arabic it means 'to call'. The Sharia (religious law) allows you to call out to someone nearby if you need his help concerning knowledge, or his physical strength in order to achieve some good for yourself. But this calling

for

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help is not the same as the *dua* we are discussing now. Indeed *dua* is the essence of worship. It is the call to God to bestow what is good for us and turn us away from what is harmful. And we address this call to the Almighty directly, without any mediator or material means. When we go to the doctor he can only prescribe the medicine; it is God alone who, eventually, cures us, and He alone who grants, through tangible means, what is good for us.

A believer, therefore, equips himself with the necessary means, and then seeks the help of the Almighty to make them come into effect. If the believer cannot find such means, he simply invokes the Almighty in the firm hope that the Diving door is ever open to him and that his invocation will be answered. Therefore, he does not invoke anyone other than God, neither does he associate anyone else other than Him in his invocation. This is the essence of worship which our forefathers abided by.

Our true faith rests in our firm belief in the word of God. Manifestations of *Ibadat* (Worship)

Worship reflects our convictions in our faith.

If our hearts are filled with the firm belief that all good and harm come from God alone and that He alone is the arbiter of what is lawful or forbidden. Total love, absolute fear and complete obedience are all only for His sake. With such awareness we can become conscious of the Glory of the Almighty and understand the inner meaning of the expression *Allahu Akbar* (God is the very greatest). Once we are equipped with such a consciousness, everyday problems seem trivial. We express our absolute exaltation to God through certain actions, such as *dua* (invocation) and *salat* (prayer), when we

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kneel, prostrate, make vows and sacrifices and chant and praise His name. A believer performs these actions for God alone and does not pray, kneel or prostrate to anyone other than Him. This conviction of faith is the essence of worship. *Dua* is the most remarkable form of exaltation.

Muslims' Attitudes Towards These Verses.

The Muslims of the early ages did not express any opinion on the previously quoted verses from the Holy Quran. They did not try to describe them as either figurative or non-figurative expressions, and they did not try to interpret them either. They simply professed

total belief in them as Divine Revelations, the purpose and intent of which are known only to God.

Later on, when scholastic theology came into existence as a subject in its own right, arguments were put forward to prove the basic tenets of faith in Islam to counter some doubts that had spread. A class of scholars then criticised these arguments, speaking on the verses referring to the Divine Attributes and explaining what is literal and what is allegorical. However, scholars have widely disputed and differed among themselves on this subject. But the truth of the matter is that all such verses are also Divine revelation, so whoever denies a part of it or strips it of its meaning, or interprets it in its literal and materialistic meaning is acting blasphemously, *kufr*. It is therefore dangerous to delve into these verses - like entering a hazardous zone where you know you will be destroyed. The best course is to avoid such an area, which is why a believer should not analyse them deeply, or list them separately to provoke discussion. As mentioned before, we should abide by the path shown by our Muslim forefathers, and remember that our true faith rests in our firm belief in the word

of God.

The Ultimate Purpose of Worship

As stated earlier, worship assumes a physical form through words pronounced by the tongue, and movements carried out by the body, and that faith is the 'soul' of worship. I would like to mention the following, from among the several aims of worship.

The main objective is to try to achieve what pleases God. We should therefore not use worship as a means of acquiring wealth, position or fame, nor should we make it a stepping stone to worldly achievements nor a means of making a name for ourselves as being devout. In other words, we should try to be absolutely sincere in our worship. Anything affecting or impeding this sincerity is known as hypocrisy.

Sincerity is always linked with intention, as intention is the driving force behind every action. God Almighty will question us on the Day of Judgement not only about our actions, but also for the reasons behind them. An action may be good in itself, but if the intention and purpose for which it is performed is not genuine and dedicated to God, it loses its worth.

Prayer for example is a noble act, but if it is offered with the intention of attracting attention or

creating an impression of piety and devotion to God the action becomes empty.

This is why the historical event of migration from Mecca to Medina differed according to the intentions of the migrants, Outwardly everyone performed the act of migrating in a uniform manner, but inwardly there were those who migrated! for different reasons.

Those who went to Medina to protect their religion and

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please God migrated for the right reasons and in all sincerity, whereas those who went in the hope of getting married or striking a business deal, migrated for a worldly purpose.

Awareness of our actions therefore is the dividing line between actions performed as worship and those performed automatically, as a matter of habit. A person may oversleep and then rush off to work without having had breakfast, and may not eat or drink before sunset. In one way he will have observed a day of fast, but he will not have the reward for fasting as someone observing fast with the intention of fasting.

Anything we do that is lawful and permissible, if it is done with the intention of pleasing God, is considered to be an act of

worship. This means that our daily routine of eating, drinking, sleeping, sitting, standing, working, our married life and so on, are all forms of worship as long as they are performed consciously. And this is what God means in the verse of the Holy Quran where He says:

I created the jinn and humankind only that they might worship Me. (5:56)

The broad scope of the meaning of religion, therefore, needs to be understood as explained above - and worship is the ultimate goal of all human beings.

Summary

To sum up, the unity of Divinity, the fourth and most important of all issues concerned with the subject of faith, means the belief that all good and evil comes from God alone, and that we should not seek to gain benefit from anyone other than Him. We seek such benefit either through the 'rules' -laws of Nature that He laid down for this universe, or directly

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from Him, through prayer and invocation. We plead to Him alone and set up no other partners or mediators with Him.

We seek His help alone directly from Him, or

through the means He has put at our disposal. We do all this in the full. knowledge that it is He, the Almighty, Who grants all benefits, Our absolute love is for Him only. and it is this love which motivates us to be completely obedient to Him, and our fear of Him that stops us from committing acts which would cause His displeasure. We glorify Him from the bottom of our hearts and reflect our devotion to Him in our speech and actions, because satisfying Him is our most cherished desire. Hence our prayers and worship are not directed to anything whatsoever that belongs to this world.

Scientific Enquiry

God has given us the power of intellect and has ordered us.

to think and reflect on the secrets of the universe, with its unique laws and traditions. These have been laid down by Him so that we may behave in accordance with His wishes. Therefore the study of the natural sciences and the discovery of the secrets of the universe are acts of worship, provided such knowledge serves to strengthen our faith and should, in fact, make us more devout

We should use this knowledge for causes that are both beneficial to mankind and acceptable to our Lord, and not exploit it in order

to cause disaster and destruction in the world.

Doubt Removed

Many people ask, "Why is it that someone who doesn't believe in God, but performs acts which help mankind, such as

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charity, building homes for the poor. establishing medical and educational institutions, etc., will not, according to what you believe, receive any reward in the next world?".

The answer is that God will certainly not disregard the labour of any human being, and He will not deny the reward due to a doer of good deeds. Indeed, He will respond to his requests. Is there a better way of expressing one's gratitude to a person who has done something good for him?

If the doer of a good deed believes in God and the life hereafter, and seeks the reward of the next world. God will grant him his reward. However, if the person is only interested in worldly achievements, he will be rewarded accordingly.

Why should you concern yourself about his reward if he himself does not seek the reward in the next life?

Fruitless Arguments

Some issues concerning the Divine Attributes

and the existence of God have led to too many long-winded debates and discussions, filling volumes of theological works. Questions such as whether God's knowledge belongs to Him, or whether He acquired it, whether characteristics such as knowledge, ability, power, etc., are inborn in Him, and whether these characteristics differ from His other characteristics, such as the power to create, grant, employ and so on, lead to unnecessary tension, like the question regarding the Holy Quran and whether it was eternal or created.

Likewise issues regarding the difference between 'good' and 'the best', fate, destiny, man's willpower, etc. are equally fruitless. The right approach to all these issues is to refuse to delve into them and discuss them. Such issues are, to use a

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legal term, 'rejected cases', for the following reasons:

1 - Our predecessors, who were the best of Muslims and among whom were the companions of the Prophet, peace be upon him, and the companions of the companions, did not analyse these points, as their faith was sounder and purer than ours, and, as stated before, they set models for us to follow.

2 "-Anyone making a careful study of the views of the various factions will find there is a unified undercurrent based on the parity between God the Almighty and mankind. All these factions seek to apply human logic and psychology to the Almighty. But this is wrong as there is no comparison between God and a human being. In fact, nothing can be compared to God the Almighty.

3 - All the aforementioned issues and questions belong to the realm of metaphysics, in other words, the world of the unseen. As we mentioned in Chapter IV under Code Five, our power of intellect is limited to the material world and cannot therefore consider issues which are beyond it

Approaching These Issues

I would like to put forward a new approach, which is nearer the truth and more beneficial to us.

We should give up arguing about the attributes of God and turn our attention to actions which will please Him and

He will consequently reward us. So instead of indulging in futile discussions such as those previously mentioned, let us

attend to our duty to keep to the path He ordained so that He may learn about us in a way which is acceptable to Him.

This is the truth of the matter, and anyone who argues about God's attributes is like a class of students who are told

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that the ministry of education has committed a high level committee to conduct their examinations. The sensible students will make sure they prepare themselves thoroughly and do not miss out any of the syllabus. The foolish foolish students, on the other hand, will start asking questions about whether the committee will approach the examinations collectively or on an individual basis, whether the committee consists of an odd or even number of members, whether they will come by air or by road, etc. They will continue to argue in this way so that on the day of the examinations they will be completely unprepared. Indeed God will not ask us on the Day of Judgement about what viewpoints scholars put forward, or about those arguments that filled so many volumes. If such matters were important, the Prophet of God, peace be upon him, would have discussed them himself. So why not turn our attention away from such issues which are the result of ancient Greek philosophy, about which most formulations have been proved false, and arguments in their favour have not stood the test of time. Creating a new philosophy just

as misleading as the earlier philosophy of metaphysical thought has caused yet more chaos and confusion.

Why not keep the Book of God before us, using it as our guiding force and accepting what it says regarding the Unseen - and leave the rest to Him.

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CHAPTER VII

MANIFESTATION OF FAITH

A student who knows that his examinations are only a week

away, but spends his time having fun instead of studying, does not realise how near his exams are. Similarly, someone

may ask you the way, listen carefully to your detailed instructions and set out in the opposite direction' With regards to the last example, the person's reaction shows that

he does not trust you completely. In the same way, we can

say that faith is reflected in the actions and behaviour of a believer.

Faith and Action

Faith and action are inseparable. Action is a consequence of faith, a cherished fruit, and an outward expression of inner conviction. This is why God has, in the Holy Quran, associated

faith with good action. .

**They only are the (true) believers whose hearts feel
.fear when God is mentioned, and when His
revelations are .recited unto them they increase their
faith, and who trust in**

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their Lord. (8:2).

**They only are the (true) believers who believe in God
and his messenger and, when they are with him on
some common errand, go not away until they have
asked leave of him. Lo! those who ask leave of thee,
those are they who believe in God and His messenger.
So, if they ask thy leave for some affair of theirs, give
leave to whom thou wilt of them and ask for them
forgiveness of God. Lo! God is forgiving, merciful.
(24:62).**

**Successful indeed are the believers who are
humble in their prayers and who shun vain
conversation, and who are payers of poor due, and
who guard their modesty-save from their wives or the
(slaves) that their right hands possess, for then they
are not blameworthy, but whosoever! craveth beyond
that, such are transgressors, and honour! their
commitments and their covenants, and who pay heed
to their prayers. (23:1-9).**

It is not righteousness that you turn your

face to the east and the west, but righteous is he who believeth God and the Last Day the angels and the Scripture and the Prophets; and giveth wealth, for love of Him, to kinsfolk and to orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and to those who ask, and to set slaves free; and observeth proper worship and pay the poor-due. And those who keep their treaty when they make one, and the patient in tribulation and adversity and time of stress. Such are they who are sincere. Such are the God-fearing. (2:177)

Increase in Faith

Some scholars consider faith to be a total and indivisible concept, so they hold that a person has to be either a believer

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or an unbeliever: there can be no intermediate stage, and faith is therefore constant and neither increases nor decreases.

But the majority of scholars link faith with good actions .and consider it as varying in degrees, in proportion to these 'actions. In fact, this is the view expressly stated in the Holy Quran:

... and when the revelations of God are recited unto them they increase their faith (8:2)

As for those who believe, it has increased them

in faith. (9:124)

... and all this but increased their faith and their readiness to surrender (themselves unto God). (33:22).

Negligence and Belief

Scholars of the traditional school of thought all agree that someone who commits a forbidden act without denouncing its prohibition, or a person neglecting a duty while admitting that it is a duty, yet at the same time expressing no contempt for it, 'might be punished in the next world, though he will not be accused of blasphemy or be condemned to the eternal hell fire.

It is with this significance and meaning that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said that an adulterer is not a believer at the time he commits adultery. In other words, he fails to realise that God is watching him, for if he were aware of this he would refrain from such an act out of fear and modesty. Someone planning an adulterous affair may be caught by his father in the nick of time. In this case, will his sense of modesty stop him from fulfilling his plan? If his sense of modesty and respect for his father can prevent him from carrying out such an affair, it will become all the more

imperative when he
thinks of God.

Fruits of Faith

Actions performed with sincerity are the fruits of faith. Our Prophet, peace be upon him, summed up this point eloquently and precisely in the following *hadith*:

"Worship God as though you see Him. If you do not see Him, He verily sees you."

***Dhikr* (Remembrance of God)**

Dhikr is the most important fruit of faith. T recollect' having read about a very pious man who asked his uncle, also a pious and God-fearing individual with whom he had spent his 1 early years. "Uncle, what should I do in order to become like you?" "Say the following phrase three times a day: Verily God is looking at me; verily God is observing me!'" his uncle told j him.

He did so for a week, and then his uncle asked him to repeat it three times after each prayer for another week, and finally he taught him to repeat it straight from his heart without!! physically pronouncing the words. |

Dhikr is the subject to which the Holy Quran most draws

our attention, and no other subject has been emphasised so much, and no other person has been

commended and praised by God in the Holy Book as the one who abides by *dhikr*.

Linguistically the word *dhikr* has two meanings: *dhikr* from the heart and *dhikr* through speech, both of which have; been used in the Holy Quran.

Therefore if you wish to be included among those who are constantly God-conscious, you should remember Him from the bottom of your heart and with the power of your intellect. Your

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efforts with regard to this should be reflected in your conduct and behaviour wherever you are: on your own, in the company of friends, in the street - and whatever mood you are in.

You should only do what is acceptable to God.

Whatever

you do should be done with the intention of obedience to Him, and this includes abstention from what is forbidden. Your indulgence in what is allowed should be with the intention of seeking His reward. -And if you have two different choices. always go for the one which is nearer to God and farther from the temptation to being misled.

If you are caught off guard and are drawn away from

the

path of God, but realise what you have done later, you always have the chance to repent and ask for forgiveness.

Verily, they who are conscious of God bethink themselves (of Him) whenever any dark suggestion from Satan touches

them - whereupon, lo! they begin to see things clearly. (7:201).

The best way of remembering God is coordinating and integrating the way you speak with the way you feel. Anything you say coming from a mind preoccupied with something else unrelated to the matter at hand, holds no real meaning.

For example, a street vendor wanting to sell his wares may repeat, "God is generous" to attract people's attention to what he is selling, rather than because he is really remembering God. Similarly we cannot take someone seriously who is drinking alcohol, or singing crude songs while talking about God.

The best forms of *dhikr* are those uttered when we recite the Holy Quran, while kneeling and prostrating in prayer or as suggested by our Prophet, peace be upon him.

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These days, congregations of *dhikr* are performed in a way that is regarded unfavourably in Islam. *Dhikr* performed through dance or other movements and making rather strange sounds are also not allowed, unless such dancing is performed by someone in a state of divine ecstasy.

Fear and Hope

One form of remembering God is to 'fear' Him - to be in awe of Him - and to be aware of how we can suffer if we'. forget Him, and to hope for His pardon- Let us examine those two concepts in detail.

We must always bear in mind that God settles an account quickly and we soon feel great discomfort when we lose our way and forget Him. A real awareness of this 'punishment' makes us eager to please Him, as we realise that this makes us feel much more comfortable and at ease. While this realisation induces fear in us, recognition of His readiness to forgive reminds us of His great compassion and generosity and consequently inspires us with hope. A God-fearing heart will always receive His mercy.

Verily, none but people who deny the truth can ever lose hope of God's life-giving mercy. (12:87)

A person who lives in an illusion of hopes without being aware of God's power may feel that he is protected from what is in store for him. God says

the following about such people:

**But none feels secure from God's deep devising
save people who are already lost. (7:99)**

**As mentioned earlier there is no similarity
between the Creator and the created. This means that
the fear you have for the Creator is not the same as
the fear you have for His**

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**Creatures. For example you would be terrified if a lion
confronted you, showing its teeth, and you were
unarmed and unable to protect yourself. But fear of
God is completely different. You might be able to
ward off the lion's attack but you cannot ward off what
is willed by God.**

**Here is another example. You may be caught in a
violent flood and panic that it will sweep you away.
But that fear is not like the fear of God Who has
caused the flood and Who, if He so desires, has the
power to stop it or cause it to flow again. It may be
possible to escape from the flood, whereas there is no
escape from the suffering of God's punishment when it
occurs. Fear of illness, hardships, loss of your near and
dear ones, 'financial loss, etc., cannot equal the fear of
God the Omnipotent and Omniscient. If He wills He
may cause you ^great hardship. And if He wills He
may spare you. But no creature can cure you of any**

illness which your Creator has inflicted on you.

A Muslim must therefore be aware of the importance of 'both hope and fear. This can be demonstrated very simply in our prayer , when we utter the phrase, "God the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful", followed by "Lord of the Day, of Judgement".

Unfortunately most Muslims these days put more importance on hope and pardon, than on fear and punishment. However, this does not mean that a devout Muslim should grow complacent simply because he performs all the duties God has ordained and abstains from what is forbidden. He should continue exerting himself and aspire for a privileged position in the next life, and not be like the student who just manages to scrape through his exams without getting a high grade.

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***Tawakkul* (Trust in God)**

God the Almighty says in the Holy Quran:

If you believe in God, place your trust in Him.

(10:84)

God loves those who place their trust in Him.

(3: 159)

What is the meaning and significance of

***tawakku*? We stated earlier that God has created both**

good and bad, and that the laws He has laid down for the universe contain the means for achieving both.

Does *tawakkul* mean therefore that we can abdicate responsibility for what happens, saying that everything is God's responsibility?

There were among the Sufis those who interpreted *tawakkul* as meaning they could abandon their responsibilities and instead of earning their living, they waited for work to find them without taking action to look for it. If one of them fell sick they left him without medical care, hoping he would be cured without medicine or treatment. They would also travel across the desert without food or water, expecting to be bestowed with whatever they required without making, any effort. They had the same attitude towards seeking knowledge. To prove their point they would misquote the verse from the Holy Quran which reads:

And remain conscious of God, since it is God Who teaches you. (2:282)

But this is only a portion of a verse, and anyone reading the whole of it would realise that the meaning they claimed is not the true interpretation. Even if we were to accept their statement for the sake of argument and presume that we can attain knowledge simply by being conscious of God, we could still reason by saying that God-consciousness is attained by

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abiding by what is ordained by God. As He ordains the seeking of knowledge, anyone failing to abide by that is not a truly God-conscious person, and therefore his attitude is contrary to Divine guidance. There are people who live only to make money, and their whole lives are orientated towards that goal, and there are people who believe that the means justify the end, and that it is by means alone that logical results are achieved. In fact such an assumption is contrary to reality because the desired result is often not achieved, in spite of the availability of the means. For example, two patients in hospital may receive identical treatment from the same doctor and one may recover while the 'other may die. Similarly, a farmer could use the latest methods and machinery, sow the best quality seeds and fertilise his land with the best fertiliser available, yet a cold spell or some other drastic weather conditions could lay waste to all his efforts.

Therefore the means alone cannot produce the end result. However, it is not sensible to ignore them altogether. The right course is to be led by Divine guidance. We can employ all the ; means at our disposal and pray to God to grant us the result -.rather like tying a camel and entrusting its safety to God, or

preparing yourself as well as you can for an exam, and trusting God and praying to Him for your success.

This is the true meaning of *Ta-wakkul* - trust in God. It does not mean ignoring whatever is at our disposal to get a job . done, nor should we disregard the universal laws He has laid down: at the same time, however, we must be aware of the fact that God alone bestows what is good or bad. We need the means to achieving what we wish, and employing the means available to us is away of obeying God. However, we cannot resort to the means alone as the results are

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in God's hands. Therefore, anyone genuinely trusting God will use every lawful means at his disposal to achieve his goal and will firmly believe that it is God Who grants success.

Gratitude

Gratitude represents the sense of contentment we feel with whatever comes our way, good or bad. God says in the Holy Quran:

**He who is grateful (unto God) is but grateful for the good of his own self. (31:12)
God will requite all who are grateful (to Him)
.(3:144)**

Being grateful for whatever befalls us, believing

that it comes from God, is a fruit of faith. Normally we express gratitude to someone who has been good to us, but that person is only a channel through which God has granted us that good, By the same token we also feel guilty if we do not express our thanks to that person. So what can be said about our immense gratitude to God, Who has granted us the power of our senses of perception, the functions of all our organs, besides granting us health and safety, the earth from which we can survive, and countless other blessings, so many that we could never make a statistical record of them!

Man does not always realise the value of God's blessings on him until he is deprived of them. Someone with bad toothache would realise what a blessing it would be not to have any more pain, but once the pain has gone he may forget the blessing. We realise the blessings of having money when we have financial difficulties. And look how restless we become when there is a power cut and our home is plunged into darkness. Once the power comes back though, we forget to appreciate it.

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So is it not necessary to thank God for His countless blessings on you? This can be done through

words and actions. The words of gratitude we can often repeat are, "Praise be to God.. Oh my Lord unto You be all praise!".

Showing gratitude through action is sharing what you enjoy with others. A rich man would show his gratitude by helping the poor, a strong person would help the weak, a person in authority can always stand by truth and justice; if, for instance, you are enjoying a five course meal while your neighbour is starving, it would be an act of ingratitude to God on your part if you did not give a share of your food to your neighbour. Actions speak louder than words, and it isn't enough just to repeat the words. "Praise be to God!" a thousand times.

You can express your gratitude to God by truly appreciating whatever you have been given, without being discontented or greedy or envying others who have more than you do.

So a truly grateful person is grateful at heart, and contented with what God has given him. He will help the poor and the needy and continuously express his gratitude to God.

Patience

A Muslim enjoys two different kinds of blessings, good fortune, for which he gives thanks, recognising it as a reward from God, and patience: if misfortune comes his way he is patient and realises that in the

long run he will receive a reward from God.

The reward God grants a poor man who puts up with his poverty with fortitude will be equal to, if not more than, the reward to a rich man who is grateful to God.

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And most certainly shall We grant unto those who are patient in adversity their reward, in accordance with the best that they ever did. (16:96).

Life in this world is not an eternal bed of roses, and there are bound to be prickly patches, like illness, financial loss or betrayal by a friend. Such crises are all part of life. An Arab poet said:

Life has confronted you with many unsavoury things.

Whereas you wished it to be pure of all dirt and anything unsavoury.

He who yearns ever for the cool shades of time. Is like one who craves for the warmth of fire in the midst of winter.

God says in the Holy Quran:

And most certainly shall We try you by something of fear and hunger and loss of wealth, of lives and of (labour's) fruits. But give glad tidings unto those who are patient in adversity. (2:155- 156).

You cannot escape from problems and crises, but you have a choice either to bear them with patience or to rebel against them. The latter reaction solves nothing and only makes you more miserable. Dealing with problems with perseverance is the first category of patience.

The second category is self-control. A young man may be surrounded by beautiful girls flaunting themselves at him, and he may feel sexually aroused, but his fear of God will make him lower his gaze, refusing to cross the threshold of the door to forbidden pleasure, even though it is wide open. An employee may be offered a bribe equal to six months' salary,

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but refuses to accept it even though he may need it desperately; or a student may have the opportunity to look up the answers in his book while he is taking an exam, but refrains, in spite of the fact that he would be sure to pass if he cheated. All these are acts of restraint representing patience.

We are always tempted to follow our desires, even though we know that giving in to them is bad for us. But the person who, even though he is surrounded by temptations, manages to steer clear of them is truly patient.

**The third category of patience is adhering to God's will. Like the performance of prayers, especially *fajr*, when we have to get out of our warm beds to pray, the observance of Ramadan, particularly during the summer months when we cannot drink, and the payment of *zakat* and giving of alms, even though we may be reluctant to part with our money. However, all these acts represent our obedience to God's commands. Leading a spiritual life in this day and age when we see so much wrong doing all around us can be rather like a man holding a hot poker in his hand! A religious person may be laughed at and humiliated by the public, or even persecuted by those in power. Some people may have a cut in their salaries or be banished from their countries because of their religious beliefs. But anyone who firmly sticks to his beliefs, despite such trials and tribulation, is like those whom God has described in the following verses:
... those who, having attained to patience in adversity, in their Sustainer place their trust.
(16:42).**

Those who will be given their reward twice over because they are patient and repel evil with good and spend

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of that We have provided them. (28:54).

But none is granted it, save those who are steadfast, and none is granted it save the owner of great happiness. (41:35).

Submission to God's Will

We mentioned earlier that faith is an aspect of the heart and a territory known only to God. However, outward appearances can be observed by everyone, and we therefore differentiate a believer from a nonbeliever

through his actions and words. Thus Islam is the manifestation of inner faith.

The meaning of the word 'Islam' is to submit. A child submits to his parents because he trusts them, and we submit to our partners out of love and desire, and a person who has been defeated submits or surrenders to his conquerors. This last example is based on fear of the victor. But a believer submits to God's will totally and unconditionally. He obeys every command, even though he may not know the reason behind it or the benefit to be derived from it, and he stays away from whatever God has forbidden, without necessarily understanding the reason behind the prohibition.

This submission has two aspects. The first is practical and can be observed in the form of obedience in actions and speech,- points which we shall be discussing later when discussing Islam as a practical

faith. The other aspect concerns our mental attitude, which is what we shall be discussing now while we are talking about faith.

This second aspect refers to our inner acceptance of God's will. It is a contentment which brings peace of mind and therefore gives us the courage of our conviction. As a result of such contentment, we have no difficulty in carrying out our

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**duties and keeping away from what is forbidden, without hesitation or complaint. God the Almighty says in the Holy Quran;
But nay, by thy Lord, they will not believe (in truth) until they make thee judge of what is in dispute between them. (4:65)
(which is the practical aspect).**

... and find within themselves no dislike of that which thou decidest, and submit with full submission (4:65) (which is the inner, mental aspect).

This represents our mental attitude. It is clear from these verses that faith in God depends basically on our being convinced in our hearts about the rightness of the Divine Command, and therefore we can accept it with full satisfaction.

The only response of believers whenever they face the judgement of God and His Apostle

can therefore be no other than:

We have heard and we pay heed! - and it is they, they who shall attain to a happy state. (24:51).

Some people always want to know the wisdom behind what is required of them. It is as if they would like to withhold their compliance until they know about it. But this wisdom can be perceived either through the actual text, or by inference - or it may not be perceived at all. In the case that it cannot be perceived, does this mean we disobey our Lord?

How would you feel if you had a child who refused to obey you without first knowing the wisdom and reasons behind , whatever it is you want him to do? You would probably think he was rather strange. Perhaps you want to satisfy his curiosity, but because the matter is urgent, you have no time to
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explain. On the other hand it may be something which needs to be kept secret. But if your son still fails to understand the situation and insists on knowing the reason, you would find his: behaviour defiant, and expect him to obey you because he is your son and you are his parent- Similarly, a military officer refusing to carry out the commander's orders without

first knowing the reasons and purpose behind them, would probably end up being court martialled.

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Yet God's precedence over his worshippers is far beyond that of parents over their children or army officers over-soldiers. It is His precedence that we obey Him in all respects, regardless of whether they are in harmony with our own desires; or not.

It is not for us to look for proof and to strain our minds to' find a viewpoint from the books of jurisprudence to support; our inclinations. And we should not take the foreign vacillations and traditions which we have imbibed into our; culture in form and content as authoritative evidence against the Divine Writ, 'tailor-making' the text to suit our own interpretation. We have done this even at the risk of going outside the principles of Islamic teaching in case our religion contradicts the values and traditions of foreign civilisations.

But. if in the future the values of society change, and we shift from Western ideals to those of the East, will we have to look for yet more interpretations?

We should mention our position regarding concepts such as democracy or socialism in this context. Sometimes, we praise democracy and say it is in harmony with Islam, and when it suits our interest we may take the opposing view and say that

socialism is in tune with Islam, thus wavering between paradoxical views merely to please the powers that be.

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But these are not the right sources of guidance.

We should refer for this guidance and redressal to our problems only in the Divine Writ, and be satisfied with it. This would be the position of believers who genuinely believe in the truth of Islam.

Rigidity and Flexibility

To love and hate for God's sake are also proofs of faith, For example, we may love someone who is religious and God -fearing even though we do not gain any material benefit from him. And we may dislike an arrogant unbeliever, even though he has not done us any harm. We may have very close links with him, but we still dislike him and keep away from him because the bond of brotherhood in religion is stronger than brotherhood based on kinship or affinity, or the fraternity of lineage and nobility by birth.

Prophet Noah's son was, by Divine Writ, excluded from his family because of his blasphemy- God Almighty has ordained that there should be no friendship and peaceful coexistence between believers and adamant transgressors against religion. There is

**no Divine sanction for "peaceful coexistence"
however strong the relations may be between the two
parties. The Holy Quran states:**

**Thou canst not find people who (truly) believe in
God and the Last Day and (at the same time) love
anyone who ,, contends against God and! his
Apostle. (58:22).**

**This does not mean that they are compelled to
accept Islam. However, it does mean that they should
be prevented from creating obstacles in the path of
Islam and from *opposing* its message. They are most
welcome to accept our religion *if* they are convinced
about it and become one of us, enjoying the**

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**rights and privileges we enjoy and taking on the same
responsibilities. Or, if they wish, they may keep to
their own religion, in which case we shall reciprocate
and maintain peace with them, as long as they do not
oppose our faith,**

**This means that a believer's feelings of love and
dislike are purely for the sake of his religion. His love
is expressed through his generosity, courtesy, patience
and sacrifice. He may humiliate himself for his
brother's sake and take this in his stride, or sacrifice
something which he really needs for his brother's sake.
His feelings of hatred for God's sake become manifest**

through his anger and resentment. He defends his faith vehemently and fights against its enemies with all his might. He is therefore at the same time flexible and rigid, hard and kind. He reserves his tolerance and kindness for his brothers in Faith, and his harshness and vehemence are directed towards the enemies of his faith and evil forces. The Holy Quran states; Muhammad is God's Apostle, and those who are with him are firm and unyielding towards the disbelievers. (48:29).

... humble towards the believers, proud toward all who deny the truth: (people) who strive hard in God's cause, and do not fear to be censured by anyone who might censure; them. (5:54).

These verses describe the attitude of believers when they spared no effort for the sake of *jihad-1* - striving hard in God's cause. But when we gave up jihad and did not abide by God's will, and started fighting among ourselves and were submissive in the face of our enemies. God caused us to suffer greatly by allowing us to be dominated by those who do not fear Him or have any mercy for us. Such people have ruled our lands and

become masters.

Repentance

and Atonement

God has made man grow used to the easy pleasures of a fleeting life, such as wealth, sex and fame. Also, man very quickly succumbs to the character traits of anger, revenge and corruption, and is ever tempted to be misguided by negative forces within. So how can he save himself from such temptations?

In fact God, out of His mercy, has given man the [opportunity for repentance. Through repentance and atonement man can transform this record of wrong actions

into one of good actions and still be rewarded in the life hereafter. God the Almighty is indeed ever-forgiving: Excepted however, shall be they who repeat and attain to faith and do righteous deeds: for it is they whose .(erstwhile) bad deeds God will transform into good ones, that God is indeed much- forgiving, a dispenser of grace. (25:70).

Provided we are genuinely repentant, the door of repentance is open for us as long as we live, and stays open till we draw our last breath-until that hour when the dying man's soul reaches his throat. It is the hour when we face the truth as conveyed by the Prophet, peace be upon him. The sum and substance

of a person's repentance will be manifest at that labour, As repentance is an expression of voluntary surrender to God, it will be of no avail when a man draws his last breath if he did not opt to repent consciously when he had the chance. This type of last-minute repentance is more an action performed under duress than one done voluntarily. God the Almighty says:

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Verily, God's acceptance of repentance relates only to those who do evil out of ignorance and then repent before their time runs out; and it is they unto whom God will turn again in His mercy - for God is all knowing, wise; whereas repentance shall not be accepted from those who do evil deeds until their dying hour and then say, "Behold, I now repent!" nor from those who die as deniers of truth ... (4:16 -18). Resisting temptation and being determined not to behave sinfully again are among the basic conditions for genuine repentance. For example, you could not accept an apology from someone who throws dirty water at you, apologises when you complain, but threatens to do the same thing the next day.

Repentance has two aspects, spiritual and physical. The spiritual aspect is reflected in curability

to realize how much damage sinful actions can cause, and the physical aspect represents itself in how you restrain yourself from doing them in the first place by applying the brakes at the right moment the self'carries the blame', however, if it fails to do so. In other words, a crime committed by someone who is not aware of its seriousness is much less when compared to someone who is fully aware of its consequences.

The second point regarding repentance is that good actions should predominate - the urge to abide by noble values rather than upholding values which are destructive and corrupt. In other words, repentance should reflect itself in a change of behaviour. The Holy Quran states:

And when those who believe in Our revelations come unto thee, say: Peace be unto you ! Peace be unto *you*! Your Lord has prescribed for Himself mercy, that those of you who doeth evil through ignorance and repenteth

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afterward thereof and doeth right (for him), lo! He is forgiving, merciful. (6:54).

But whosoever repenfevh after his wrongdoing and amendeth, /o ! God will relent toward him. Lo! God is forgiving, merciful.'

(3:89).

Except those who repent and amend and make manifest (the truth). These if is toward whom I relent. I am the Relenting, the Merciful.

(2:160).

One has to turn over a new leaf by genuinely trying not to transgress against Divine Law and being determined not to repeat one's mistakes. But if, despite your resolve, your willpower fails you, or circumstances force you to do wrong, then you repent again, you will be forgiven even if the same situation recurs.

However, if your determination weakens and you say to yourself, "Never mind. I'll fulfill my desire to do such and such a wrongful act this time, and then ask for forgiveness" your repentance is not genuine and will therefore not be accepted.

It is sufficient to repent by abstaining from wrongful acts while being fully aware of what you are doing. God in His greatness will forgive you.

But say you hurt another human being by stealing his money or hurting him physically, giving false witness, gossiping or blackmailing, etc. In all such instances you need to put things right with the person concerned or receive his forgiveness. In turn. God may show you mercy. Otherwise, on the Day of Judgement that

person may get credit for all your good actions, while you will have to bear the brunt of his misdeeds.

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But however many sins are committed, the door of repentance is ever open, and we should never think God will not forgive us. In fact, despairing of his forgiveness is the gravest sin of all'

Oh you servants of Mine who have transgressed against your own selves! Despair not of God's mercy. Behold, God forgives all sins. (39:53).

Thus true repentance is to give up doing what we know is wrong and consciously to do what we know to be right. One should ask for forgiveness from God alone as ordained in the Holy Quran:

He brought you into being out of the earth and made you thrive thereon. Ask him, therefore, to forgive you your sins, and then turn towards Him with repentance. (11:61).

Hence ask your Sustainer to forgive you your sins, and then turn towards Him in repentance. For verily my Sustainer is a dispenser of grace, a fount of love. (11:90).

Hence O my people, ask your Sustainer to forgive you your sins, and then turn towards Him in repentance (11:52).

The Prophet also addressed the subject of

repentance in the same way, urging us to ask for God's forgiveness and save ourselves from punishment in the life hereafter.

Sinful people can be put into various categories, one being those who live and die in blasphemy, for whom there is no hope of forgiveness:

Verily, God does not forgive the ascribing of Divinity to aught beside Him. (4:48).

The fate of believers who do not spend their lives in
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accordance with the Divine Will, and do not ask for God's forgiveness, is in the hands of God, who may pardon them if

He wishes;

He forgives any lesser sin unto whomever He wills. (4:48).

And if He wishes. He may punish them in the fire of hell though they may not stay there forever. No one should underestimate this. As mortals, we are unable to withstand a blaze even for a very short time, so why risk putting ourselves in a position where we might suffer the fire of hell for a long time?

Even though God, in His mercy and generosity, forgives those who ask for repentance after they have transgressed, the . greatest reward of all is for those

who deliberately stay away I from temptation, even when it is very strong, because of the deep respect they have in their hearts for the power of God.

For example, a man may be Just about to be unfaithful to his wife when he remembers God's wishes and is tempted no further, even though he is extremely aroused. Only a man who , has been divinely bestowed with a strong will-power is able to restrain himself from getting involved in th first place.

Getting embroiled in situations like this is rather like conducting an experiment on a dangerous contagious disease and making sure you inhale the germs at the time. Anyone who survives must have built up a strong immunity, but the chances against him catching the disease would be about one : Per cent.

That example is set in the context of a physical illness. So what about our own trasgressions? Indulgence in them does not help us build up our immune systems, so if we want to

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make sure we keep ourselves centred on Gods's will we should avoid mixing with people whose ways could lead us astray. You can judge a man by the company he keeps. In fact there is a popular saying that goes, "Tell me who your friends are, and I will tell

you who you are."

Let's hope that the younger generation realize the potential danger of these temptations, and pray for their guidance.

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CHAPTER VIII

BELIEF IN THE DAY

OF JUDGEMENT

Living with Death

Our attitude to death can be classified under four categories. There are those who support the unintelligent view of, say, a poet, who claims that, "Whatever has happened in the Past is over, and as you don't know what's going to happen in the future you might as well live for the present!".

People who have adopted this philosophy on life consider the day that has passed as something which is over and done with and they do not think about the future. They reckon that there is no point in thinking about what has happened. But, for goodness sake, it is not over!

Our deeds are accounted for in the record of our actions, good and bad, and none of them, great or small, will be left out of that record. We may hope our actions are unseen, but (it is only to our consciousness that they are unseen). Otherwise, whatever we have

done is Present in our soul, and God is aware of our deeds even though we may forget about them. In fact, people who never think

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about death are the most misled, compared to the other three categories.

We can compare the attitude of the second category of people with that of the Persian poet, Umar Khayyam. Many people were attracted to his unconventional views as far as morals were concerned. He says, "Since death is an undeniable truth and life is short and ephemeral, let's fill it with love and passion. And when we are struck with misfortune and despair, let us seek refuge in wine and poetry, and revel in forbidden pleasures!"

Then there are people who think of death as a phenomenon and an event without any consequences. These people belong to the third category. The Arab poet Abul Atahiya is well-known for his verses on the phenomenon of death, but he has not spoken of what happens after death, as if he agrees with people who claim, "Death is nothing but a deep sleep in the grave."

Finally, the fourth category of people are those who follow the way of truth because they realise that life is eternal, and that death is the beginning and not a

deep sleep. Indeed there is another, much longer life which is infinite. It may be a life of eternal bliss and joy, or one of never-ending suffering.

Life After Death

The life hereafter is the true life. It is not visible to anyone who is short-sighted and cannot be understood by anyone who is dull-witted or does not wish to hear about such things. *But* anyone who really uses his eyes and

mind to see and understand truth will realise that life consists of several stages. A man begins his life as an insignificant mass, shrunk

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within himself in his mother's womb. At that stage, if he were given the power of reasoning, he would take the womb as his ultimate abode, and one which he would only leave under duress. If he were able to speak at that stage he would declare that leaving his mother's womb would mean being dead and buried, in just the same way as we consider death and departure from this world. But it is also a process of birth, a shift from this world to another, which is more expansive and far removed from our mortal, material life. It is the world of eternal life.

Being prepared for Death

Our zest for life is an inborn human instinct. The

ambitions we nurse and the hopes we aspire to are never ending. In fact it is for this reason that death, in spite of being closely connected To our sense perceptions, is far removed from our thoughts.

Even the sight of a funeral may not remind us of our own death. On the contrary, many of us live in the illusion that death is something that will never happen to us. Even when we attend a funeral service, our minds may wander. There are graveyards around us, but do they make us think about the fact that one day we too shall be laid to rest?

Fortunately, however, the graveyard is not our ultimate abode! It is our physical bodies which will be laid to rest. The body is like a garment that we take off when it gets dirty. And the soul disentangles itself from the body in just the same way as the child disentangles itself from the placenta when it is born.

Anyone who is not following the path of God may forget about death. But a believer is always ready to meet his end and

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prepares for it by repenting to God and asking for His forgiveness. Such a person clears all his debts, in terms of money and obligations. He is continuously taking stock of his actions, thanking God for his successes and seeking forgiveness for his failures and shortcomings. He

contemplates life after death by thinking of the day when all

eyes will be forced to turn toward God, and by being aware

of punishment after death. Such a person is constantly seeking God's pleasure through his noble deeds, and through

prayer and patience.

Dying Consciously

Here are some verses from the Holy Quran regarding the subject of death: ,

Why then, when (the last breath) comes up to the throat (of a dying man), the while you are (helplessly) looking on - and while We are closer to him than you, although you see (Us) not: why then, if (you think that) you are not truly dependent (on Us), can you not cause that (ebbing life) to return - if what you claim is true? (56:83-87)

In other words, when death approaches we tend to panic and feel helpless; we bring medical help to the dying person and comfort him as much as we can. But at this point can anyone who claims not to be dependent on God, do anything to restore health and give him a new lease of life? This is a divine challenge to those who deny the existence of God. It is a question which they cannot answer.

A Senseless Doubt

Some people who have abandoned religion may cynically ask, "How can the Angel of Death possibly be with two people who are dying at the same time in say, America and China?" The answer to that statement is:

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1 - From the angel's perspective, planet earth seems like a minute particle - rather like our -.lew of a small container covered with thousands of ants. In fact, an angel is more gigantic in stature than us, visa-vis tiny creatures: the globe on which we live is like a grain of wheat in an angel's hand.

2 - The Angel of Death has helpers who give assistance in our appointed hour of death.

... when death approaches any of you, Our messengers cause him to die... (6:61)

The Day of Judgement

The second basic tenet of faith is belief in the Day of Judgement. The Holy Quran places so much importance on this principle as on belief in God: the two tenets are invariably mentioned together.

A believer is constantly aware of the Day of Judgement and this knowledge determines his actions: he does as much good as he can to reap the rewards on that Day and avoids letting involved in actions which will harm him spiritually. He will

resist even the most enjoyable and desirable temptations, realising he will have to take full responsibility for his actions on that Day. Similarly, if he is asked to undertake a difficult task, he will carry it out, being aware of the positive sequences. Such people are described in the Holy Quran as those.

... who are impelled to rise from their beds (at night) to call out to their Sustainer in fear and Hope, and who spend on others out of what We provide for them as sustenance... .(32:16)

It is people like this, who are happy to serve God

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regardless of whether times are good or bad: They are willing to let go of whatever they own for the sake of others. They are in awe of God and respect His power and ;1 at the same time, they are comforted by His mercy.

The Last Hour

The Holy Quran states that as human beings, none of us has any concept of the Last Hour, save Go I: They will ask thee (O Prophet) about the (Last Hour), [When will it come to pass?I Say: "Verily, knowledge thereof rests with my Sustainer alone. None but He will reveal it in its time". (7:187)

**"And the Last Hour will occur all of a sudden...
«like the twinkling of an eye, or closer still..."**

(16:77)

But the Holy Quran states that certain strange happenings will take place in this universe prior to the Last Hour: a creature will be brought forth to speak to mankind - the human mind cannot picture how, or what kind of beast this will be. Our knowledge is limited to the fact that God has revealed this! information.

Among the other peculiar occurrences that will COME about is the letting loose from a rampart of the savage tribes,!

**Yajuj and Majuj (referred to as Gog and Magog):
... it has been unfailingly true of any community whom we have ever destroyed that they (were people who) would never turn back (from their sinful ways) until such a time as Gog and Magog are let loose (upon the world) and swarm down from every corner (of the earth) while the true promise of resurrection draws close (to its fulfilment). But then, lo! the eyes of those who (in their lifetime) were bent**

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on denying the truth, will stare in horror, (and they will exclaim), "Oh, woe unto us! We were indeed

heedless of this (promise of resurrection!) - nay, we were (bent on) doing evil!" (21:95-97)

There are references to the Last Hour in other traditions, such as the Sayings of the Prophet, though these are not mentioned in the Holy Quran, Among them are the extinction of truth and the prevalence of ignorance, alcoholism, adultery, an increase in the number of women and a decrease in the number of men, the disappearance of honesty and trustworthiness, social imbalances, the appearance of an impostor until Jesus' appearance as the Proclaimer of the Divine Path, as revealed to the Last of All Messengers, Muhammad (peace be upon him).

Commencement of the Last Hour

The Holy Quran states that the Last Hour will-be preceded by certain signs. There will be a massive earthquake, unlike any other that mankind has witnessed, and it will come about when human life is still flourishing. The consequence will be that human society will be thrown into a state of panic and terror and plunged into gloom. This panic will be so severe that mothers may forget to nurse their babies, pregnant women will have miscarriages due to, shock and people will lose consciousness, as if they are drunk. And it will seem to thee that ail mankind is drunk, although they will not be drunk - but vehement will be (their dread of) God's

chastisement. (22:2)

The occurrence of this earthquake before the Day of Judgement is further confirmed in another verse in the Holy Quran:

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When the earth quakes with her (last) mighty quaking, and (when) the earth yields up her burdens, and man cries out, "What has happened to her?" (99:1)

Thus man will live on earth to witness the earthquake, enquire about it and trace the reasons for its occurrence.

Celestial Events

As we saw earlier, all the knowledge regarding the Day of Judgement and what will happen on that Day, belongs to the unseen realm. With our limited perception we cannot inform ourselves about it in the same way as we can find out about the material world we live in. The human mind will not be able to control it in the same way as it controls worldly affairs: our knowledge regarding That Day is based solely on our understanding of the meaning and significance of the texts concerning the subject. We find in the Holy Quran many clearly worded texts describing the changes and alterations that may occur in what we call the laws of nature. It is

understood, for example, that the continuity of these laws is dependent on the continuity of life on earth. In other words, they will cease to be valid when

this life ceases to exist

This means that we can deduce that the world we know, with its earth, stars and the marvellous system that holds it together, is but a temporary abode set up for a specific time', ' and purpose.

Other events happening on that Day are that the mountains-will be rocked so violently that they will become like cotton wool. Huge mountains will be reduced to hillocks of quicksand and the whole earth will become completely flat and bare with no rough surfaces whatsoever. The Holy Quran has

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informed us about all these events. It says that the waters of the seas will explode and evaporate into steam, the stars will fall out of their galaxies, the moon and the sun will merge, the skies will be torn away and folded, like sheets, in a large size register. And the earth will be changed into another earth. Heaven too will be changed.

Blowing of the Trumpet

We do not have any detailed description of the trumpet referred to in the Holy Quran, nor how it will

be blown. Whatever is said about it without the support of Quranic verses or authentic Traditions (Sayings of the Prophet, peace be upon him) should not be relied upon. However, in the light of what is said in the Holy Quran, we understand that the trumpet may be blown on two occasions:

And on that Day, the trumpet (of judgement) will be sounded, and all that are in the heavens and all that are on earth will be stricken with terror... (27:87)

And the trumpet (of judgement) will be sounded, and all that are in the heavens and all that are on earth will fall down senseless... (39:68)

The above verses refer to the occasion when the blowing of the trumpet will render mankind into a state of panic and senselessness.

The second occasion on which the trumpet is blown will be for resurrection. This is the occasion on which judgement will take place, as stated in the Holy Quran:

And (then) the trumpet (of resurrection) will be blown - and lo! out of their grave towards their Sustainer will they all rush forth. (36:51)

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Resurrection and Congregation

Everyone who has died will be resurrected on the

Day of Judgement, with each person being in the same mental state as on the day he died. This means he will hardly feel the timelag.

He may even be under the impression that only an hour or so has passed since his death. His mental state after resurrection is rather like that of a person who goes into a coma for three days as a result of a car accident. When he comes round he continues his normal routine as if nothing had happened. For example, he may set out to do whatever he was doing before he was struck down by the car - talking to someone, crossing the road, etc. He continues that activity without realising he has been unconscious for three days. Mankind will be in such a state on the Day of Resurrection. Among the several real-life situations similar to those that will occur on the Day of Resurrection is the following parable, which appears in the Holy Qur'an:

Or, art thou, O man, of the same mind like the one who passed by a town deserted by its people, with its roofs caved in, (and) said, "How could God bring all this back to life after its death?"

Thereupon God caused him to be dead for an hundred years, whereafter He brought him back to life (and) said, "How long hast thou remained thus?"

He answered, "I have remained thus a day, or part of a day."

He (God) said, "Nay, hut thou hast remained thus for a hundred years!" (2:258-259)

We can compare these verses with the other Qur'anic

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parable of the people in the cave who slept for three hundred years and woke up under the impression that they had only been asleep for a few hours. They sent someone with the money they had on them to buy things to eat. But of course, the money they were using was outdated! And they were totally unaware of this.

These stories illustrate the condition of all human beings on the Day of Resurrection. We too shall all be contradicting each other, thinking that we have slept for only a short while:

And on the day when the Hour riseth the guilty will vow that they did tarry hut an hour - thus were they ever deceived. But those to whom knowledge and faith are given

will say: The truth is, ye have tarried, by God's decree, until

the Day of Resurrection. This is the Day of Resurrection, but ye used not to know. (30:55-56)

Thus people will be under the illusion that they are still living in this world. But the shock and horror of that Day will cut adrift all relationships and affinity among human beings: Then those whose scales are heavy, they are the successful. (23:102)

We will ignore even our closest friends, as we shall all be so involved dealing with our own 'business'. We will even flee from our families, - offering them as ransom if need be! All human beings will be left in such a state until they will all be taken to the congregation.

God will gather every being for the congregation, from Adam until the last of his descendants: Those who died in their sleep, were drowned, devoured by wild beasts, killed in air crashes, were cremated - everyone will be resurrected by God, who created them from nothingness. Among those gathered

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for the congregation too, will be the jinns and the satans.

Hastening toward the Summoner the disbelievers say, "This is a hard day". (54:8)

Then our Lord shall command hell to appear from a distance for everyone to see. And He will say,

"Did I not charge you, O ye sons of Adam, that ye worship not the devil - lo! he is your open foe! - but that ye worship Me? That was the right path. Yet he hath led astray of you a great multitude. Had ye then no sense? This is hell, which ye were promised (if ye followed him)". (30:60-63)

And the wrong-doers shall be ordered by our Lord to stand apart in order that they be identified and at that moment every wrong doer will wish that he need not have been born as a human being. He will say,

"Oh, would that I were mere dust..." (78:40)

Then God will send all the unbelievers, along with the jinns and satans whom they worshipped as gods, to hell. These gods include: Zeus and Aphrodite of the Greeks, Jupiter and Venus of the Romans, Hurmuz and Eherman of the Persians, Habi of the Egyptians, Bal of the Phoenicians and Lat and Uzza of the Arabs. Men set these gods up as partners to God. The Greeks and Romans set up different gods for different things: Apollo the God of sun and the arts, Bacchus the God of wine, Diana and Artemis, goddesses of wisdom, Neptune the God of the seas, and so on.

Unto them God will say, "Call those partners of Mine whom ye pretended." Then they will cry unto them, but they will not hear their prayers, and We

shall set a gulf doom between them. (18:52)

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And God will say, "What aileth you that ye help not one another?" (37:25)

The weak and the powerless will look to those who were arrogant in their use of power, who appointed themselves as leaders and guardians of the people, and led them astray along paths of polytheism and unbelief. And at that critical hour those who have been misled will ask their leaders:

"We were unto you a following, can ye then avert from us aught of God's doom?" (14:21)

But those leaders have no answer. They can only evade the questions put to them and exonerate themselves by confessing their inability either to save themselves or those whom they misled. They all stand in total submission after being humiliated before the Lord of all creations: the pantheon with all the deities will have gone, likewise false leadership will have been obliterated, the bonds between unbelievers and their objects of worship will have been broken. In fact, the very objects of worship will absolve themselves of the guilt of falsehood built around them by those who worshipped them. Even Satan will admit his faithlessness to his followers.

And when everything will have been decided, Satan

will say, "Behold, God promised you something that was bound to come true! I, too, held out (all manner of) promises to you - but I deceived you". (14:22)
Satan will shirk his responsibility and throw it on those ^'ho followed him. He will confess his incapacity and helplessness and admit that he could do nothing, save spread kicked thoughts, and lead people into temptation and false Caching. He had absolutely no power:

Yet I had no power at all over you. I but called you
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and you responded unto me. Hence, blame not me, but blame yourselves. (14:22)

Verily, Satan's power is weak indeed, (4:76)

All this is proof against those who claim to employ the jinn and satans, in order to influence people - and even persuade them that they can cure their illnesses through the use of these unseen beings,

Reckoning

Every human being will present him or herself for the reckoning. A balance of absolute justice will be set up, which will not ignore even the most trifling matter. Everything will be taken into account - all that is on earth or in the skies, even including the electrons in an atom' Man will be reckoned for all his

actions and any hypocrisy; double-dealing or deception he indulged in during his lifetime will weigh against him.

It will be an absolutely fair reckoning; only our good actions, prayers and supplications to God for pardon and mercy will stand in our favour. Any worldly attributes we may have enjoyed on earth, such as wealth, influence and power will be of no help to us on the Day of Reckoning, except for the extent to which we used these attributes for the sake of God, in His path and in obedience to Him.

On that Day, no one will be able to help anyone else, nor can anyone intercede with God unless He grants His leave. Intercession in the other world will be different from this one. In this world we may be able to mediate with someone in a position of authority on the strength of the goodwill or influence we enjoy with that person. This sort of intercession may not be sincere. It may be done with the intention of obliging an employee or having acquitted someone who was

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accused of doing wrong. However, intercession in the other

world can only take place when God, out of His mercy,

wishes to pardon someone and to honour a person out of His

generosity to humour him or her. In this case, He grants permission to someone to intercede, and, accordingly, the person to whom Divine permission is granted intervenes.

Witness and Proof

Law courts in this world are presided over by human beings who have been trained to be judges. The justice dispensed by such courts is limited and by no means flawless. Facts of every litigation are judged on the basis of material evidence. However, courts in the other world will be presided over by God; justice will be absolute and unrestricted. The prophets will bear witness, likewise the angels, who recorded good and bad actions; their register will contain statistical information on the confessions of sinners, and even the limbs of the human body will give witness regarding actions committed.

Witness by the Messengers

On the Day of Reckoning, the prophets will be brought forward:

The record (or Deeds) will be placed open; the prophets and the witnesses will be brought forward. (39:69)

Every community will be judged in the presence of its Prophet, according to the sharia (religious law), which it abided by in this world:

And thou will see all people kneeling down: all people will be called to the record. (45:28)

How then if We brought from each people a witness,

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and We brought thee as a witness against these people. (4:41)

The Books and the Scrolls

The scrolls on which deeds we have carried out in this world will be recorded and kept folded; these scrolls remain unrevealed, and a secret human beings will know nothing about. If we repent in all sincerity for the sins we committed, those sins will be erased from the scrolls. If we do not repent those deeds will remain recorded, and on the Day of Reckoning, will be brought forward and made known to everyone - like examination results. And like examination results, they will remain in the custody of the examiners as guarded secrets: no one will know who has failed until the date and time are fixed for the announcement of the results. Then those results will become known to all who are concerned about them, and news regarding those who have failed their examinations will spread among family and friends. But on the Day of Reckoning, the record of wrong deeds and failure to obey Divine Law will be made known to the entire

congregation of humanity. If you fail an examination you may lose a year of your career - but failing the divine test, ordained by God - the test of faith in God and belief and practice of what He ordains, will lead one to hell and if he *is* an unbeliever, deprive him of eternal happiness.

***On* that Day the Scrolls will be unfolded and every man will receive his record of deeds and be told:**

"Read this thine record! Sufficient is thine own SELF today to make out thine account!" (17:14)

Anyone who has more good deeds recorded to his credit by the Angel of the Right will receive his record of deeds on his

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right hand, as a glad tiding to him that his reckoning will be smooth and easy. When he reads his record, he experiences the same kind of happiness as a student who finds out he has passed his examinations when he reads his results. He wants to tell those close to him about his success: Now as for him whose record shall be placed in his right hand, he will exclaim, "Come you all! Read this my record! Behold, I did know that (one day) I would have to ; face my account". (69:19-29)

And whoever has more bad deeds on his

records, as noted 'by the Angel of the Left, will receive his record of deeds in his left hand. He will weep in self-pity and it will dawn on him that he will have to face eternal despair. He will then say:

"Oh would that I had never been shown this my record, and

neither known this my account! Oh! would that this (death of mine) had been the end of me! Of no avail to me is all that I have (ever) possessed (and) any power of argument had died away from me!" (69:25-29)

But as for him whose record shall be given to him behind his back, he will in time pray for utter destruction, he will enter the blazing flame. (84:10-i2)

The wrong-doers will read the record of their deeds and everything they have done written in it.

God will have taken (all of it) into account, even though they (themselves) may have forgotten it. (58:6)

And they will say in wonder, "Oh, woe unto us! What a record is this! It leaves out nothing, be it small or great, but

takes everything into account!" For they will find all that

they ever wrought (now) facing them. (18:49)

They will then realise that they had done wrong unto themselves and that "thy Sustainer does not wrong anyone". (18:49)

They regret the excesses they committed and on paying heed to the temptations of the devil and their own evil selves. ... a voice will call out unto them, "Indeed greater than your (present) loathing of yourselves was God's loathing of you (at the time) when you were called unto faith went on denying the truth." (40:10)

Defense followed by Confession

On the Day of Reckoning, the unbelievers will try to defend themselves and make false oaths to prove their innocence. They will behave as if they are in the presence of a : person of authority in human form, without realising that they are in the presence of God, Lord of all creations, who is aware of what is going on in everyone's conscience and the musings of every soul.

On the day God will raise them all together, then will they swear unto Him as they (now) swear unto you, and they will fancy that they have some standing. (58:18).

... and in their utter confusion they will only be able to say, "By God, our Lord, we never were idolaters." (6:23).

At that moment. God will render them speechless

and will order their limbs and internal organs to confess of the wrong they have done: the hand will admit to its mistakes and the legs. will confess about the wrong places they went to:

This day We seal up their mouths, and their hands speak out to Us and their feet bear witness as to what they used to earn. (36:65).

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When their confessions are taken note of and proven to be true, these people will reproach their organs and limbs:

And they say unto their skins, "Why testify ye against us?" They say, "God hath given us speech Who giveth speech to all things, and Who created you in the beginning, and unto Whom ye are returned." (42:21).

These human beings used to hide themselves away from the world in order to indulge in sexual pleasure, and imagined that God would not notice them! How could this be possible, even when measured by human standards of intelligence and capabilities? Television is a good example to illustrate this idea. The announcer sits in an enclosed area and presents a programme - but does this mean he is hidden from anyone's sight? Millions of people both watch and listen to him. If on a human scale we

can make information known in this way, it is even simpler for God to observe all the actions of us mortals.

**It is for this reason that the Holy Quran says:
And they say unto their skins, "Why testify ye against us?" They say, "God hath given us speech Who giveth speech to all things, and Who created you at first, and unto Whom ye are returned. You did not hide yourselves lest your ears and your eyes and your skins should testify against you, but ye deemed that God knew not much of what ye did. That, your thought which ye did think about your Lord, hath ruined you - and ye find yourselves (this day) among the lost".
(41:21 - 23).**

This is what will happen to those who do not believe in .God and who deny the Day of Reckoning. These people are unable to see beyond this world and refuse to see that life is eternal. Such people do not realise that they cannot hide

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anything from God, Who is aware of everything and how can they, in this case, possibly hide anything from their physical bodies, which are part and parcel of their own beings?

It is important, therefore, to ask God to forgive

and protect us on the Day of Judgement in the same way as He forgave us in this world, for He is the only One Who can do so.

Plausible Argument

Some people will reason by asking how our hands and feet. can possibly 'speak' when they do not have the faculty of speech.

But, if you think about it, there are inventions that 'speak': tape-recorders, films, cameras, including those which are hidden in banks and such places, and are able to take pictures of anyone who visits the bank. And if a man who robs a bank denies any accusation made against him, a film can be shown. to him, exposing his crime, showing him in the very act of stealing, maybe talking to himself or any others who were around, as proof of what he did..

If man, through his ingenuity can make such marvellous; inventions, is it not possible for God to invent something beyond the ingenuity of man?

The Reckoning and its Result

There are various categories of reckoning. The easy reckoning is for those who receive the record of their deeds in their right hands, and the severe reckoning for those who disobey God. After the reckoning, people will be placed in various categories: those who are drawn close to God in the front, followed by those who have done what is right

in their life, and finally those who lost their way.

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Now if one happens to be of those who are drawn close unto God, happiness (awaits him or her in the life to come) and inner fulfilment and a garden of bliss.

And if one happens to be among those who have attained to righteousness (he or she too will be welcomed into paradise with the words), "Peace be unto thee (that art) of those who have attained to righteousness".

But if one happens to be one of those who are wont to call the truth a lie, and (thus) go astray, a welcome of burning despair (awaits him in the life to come) and the heat of blazing fire!

Verily, this is the truth.

Extol then the limitless glory of thy Sustainer's mighty name. (56: 88-96).

The Approach to Hell

Everybody will walk along a path overlooking hell. The | speed at which they move along this path will depend how close they are to God and on the abundance of their good deeds. This means, therefore, that those who are in awe of God, and are God-conscious, will have a 'safe exit'. God the Almighty says:

There is not one of you but shall approach it. That is a , fixed ordinance of the Lord. Then We shall rescue those who kept from evil, and leave the evil-doers crouching ; there. (19:71-72).

Nay, would that ye knew (now) with a sure knowledge! For ye will behold bell-fire. (102:5 - 6).

The above verses refer to two different 'viewings' of hell. Those who are God-conscious will have the first viewing, and

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they will have a safe passage and attain salvation.

Those in the second viewing will include people who have followed evil ways and have been unjust; they will fall into the abyss of hell. The first viewing may perhaps be before the reckoning takes place, when everybody will witness the sight of hell.

Paradise and Hell

The Holy Quran presents descriptions of heaven in a style that the human intellect can easily understand. References are made such as:

Rivers will run beneath it...

Those who reside in it will wear bracelets of gold and pearls, their garments will be of silk...

Rivers of wine and rivers of honey will flow in it, and in it will be girls most beautiful of eye like unto pearls hidden in their shells, and immortal youth.

The blissful delights of heaven belong to the realm of the unseen, and God has described them in allegorical language in the Holy Quran in a manner easily understood by the human mind. It should therefore be clear to us all that everything in paradise which is referred to is unlike anything in this world That includes the rivers, milk, honey and 'the girls most beautiful of eye,'etc. In this context we can consider the quote from the Holy Quran and a saying by our Prophet peace be upon him. The Holy Quran says:

And no human being can imagine what blissful delights as yet hidden, await (in the life to come) as a reward for *all* that they did. (32:17).

And our Prophet, peace be upon him ,sys, ""God says, I have prepared for My righteous servants what no eye has ever

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seen and no ear has ever heard and no heart of man has ever conceived' "**

This is further proof of the point we made earlier, that the human being is incapable of imagining or comprehending the unseen.

Commentators on the Holy Quran who have

expounded on this subject have done so without providing proof for their theories. They tried hard to present a visual image of the life hereafter and compare it to life in this world. But their efforts were similar to those of scholastic theologians who tried to gauge and conceptualise Divine Justice and Divine Attributes on the basis of human justice and attributes: they got tangled in a web of theories and arguments. It would have been wiser for them to take the same stand as that taken by the scholars of early Islam who adhered strictly to the text regarding relevant issues, admitting the incapacity of the human mind to go beyond its limits.

One of the empty and fruitless arguments put forward by these scholars pertains to the beautiful girls of paradise. Would cohabitation -with them be similar to the way we live with women in this world? They forgot that part of the role of marriage in this world is to have children and preserve our species. But as there is no such purpose in the life hereafter, those sort of questions have no meaning. It is far more reasonable to believe everything that has been mentioned in the Holy Quran instead of going into details and interpreting what has been said in a way which is incompatible with the text.

Access to Heaven

Access to heaven cannot be achieved merely by a

sense of yearning or wishful thinking. It can only be achieved by faith

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and obedience. The Holy Quran says:

It may not accord with your wishful thinking

- nor with the wishful thinking of the followers of earlier revelations - (that) he who does evil shall be requited for it. (4:123).

Do You think that you could enter paradise unless God takes cognizance of your having striven hard (in His cause), and takes cognizance of your having been patient in adversity? (3:142).

Therefore, a believer who is accepted in the realm of paradise is one who promotes good, who has worked for God's sake and has sacrificed time, money and power on earth in order to work towards truth. Failing this, he should have avoided getting involved in actions that in the end are harmful to his spiritual development, and have learnt to be patient. Salvation is finally achieved after the reckoning is over and the believer crosses the bridge of Sirat: Those who were conscious of the Sustainer will be urged on towards Paradise, till when they reach it, they shall find its gates wide-open, and its keeper will say unto them, "Peace be upon you! Well have you done: enter then this (Paradise), herein to abide." And

they will exclaim "All praise is due to God, who has made His promise to us come true, and has bestowed upon us this expanse (of bliss) as our portions/so that we may dwell in paradise as we please! And how excellent a reward will it be for those who laboured (in God's way)!" (39:73 - 74).

What is Paradise like?

In terms of space, paradise is as vast and spacious as the

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heavens and earth put together. If this is hard to imagine, we must remember that the other world in relation to this is like this world compared to the mother's womb. As we mentioned earlier, the foetus thinks of the womb as being its own finite world. And, if you think about it, any house on earth is a million times larger than the world of the foetus.

Paradise has been prepared for the righteous and God conscious. So who are these people and what do they do? We may perhaps wish to follow in their footsteps and be blessed by their company. God has described the righteous and God conscious in the following way:

Who spend (in His way) in time of plenty and in time of hardship, and hold in check in their anger,

and pardon their fellow men because God loves the doers of good; and who when they have committed a shameful deed or have (otherwise) sinned against themselves, remember God and pray that their sins be forgiven... (3:134-35)

These are some of the qualities of the God fearing and God conscious people. And God will, out of His generosity and benevolence, admit to heaven those who acquire those qualities after practising the right kind of faith and having sincere belief in the principle of the Oneness of God.

Paradise will be divided into different categories, first and foremost is the Garden of Bliss which may not be attained by everyone: Does every one of them hope to enter a Garden of Bliss? (70:38).

The Garden of Bliss is for those who are: foremost in faith and good works (56:10)

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They who were (always) drawn close unto God. (56:12).

Then there is a part of heaven known as the 'highest place in heaven'. It is granted to those servants of God referred to the Holy Quran in the chapter entitled *Al-Furquan* (The Standard of What

is True and what is False). They are the people who possess the following virtues:

1 -Humility and patience towards those who are not as spiritually developed as they are.

2-Devotion to God, which keeps them in constant touch with Him.

3 -Awareness of the judgement they will receive in the life hereafter.

4 -Moderation in spending.

5 -Avoidance of treason to God, their fellow creatures and to themselves.

6 -Avoidance of falsehood and futility.

7-Paying attention, both in mind and manner, to God's signs.

8-The desire to bring up their families in righteousness and making them aware of Truth.

The above virtues represent, in a nutshell, a complete code of individual and social ethics, and a ladder of spiritual development, available to everyone.

Among other divisions of heaven are:

Gardens with trellises and without. (6:141).

That is to say, there are both cultivated and uncultivated

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gardens; Gardens of Abode, Gardens of Eden and the

'two Gardens', for those who are God fearing. In these gardens will be set down the record of the truly virtuous in a most lofty model.

Life in Paradise

The Holy Quran states that those who are in paradise will meet their brethren and their kith and kin:

Enter Paradise, you and your spouses, with happiness know therein neither (burning) sun nor cold severe, since its (blissful) shades will come down low over them and low will hang down its clusters of fruit, most easy to reach. (76:] 3).

In happiness will they and their spouses on couches recline. (36:56).

And as for those who have attained to faith and whose offspring will have followed them in faith, We shall unite them with their offspring. (52:21).

They will meet in an atmosphere of warmth and purity of heart:

We shall have removed whatever unworthy thoughts or feelings may have been (lingering) in their bosoms. (7:42).

...And (by then) We shall have removed whatever unworthy thoughts or feelings may have been (lingering) in their breasts, (and they shall rest) as brethren, facing one another (in love) upon thrones of happiness. (15:47).

(In such a paradise the blest will dwell)

reclining upon carpets lined with rich brocade; and the fruit of both these gardens will be within easy reach. (55:55).

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And they will be waited upon by (immortal) youths, (as if they were children) of their own, (as pure) as if they were pearls hidden in their shells. (52:24).

In that (paradise) they shall (right fully) claim all the fruits (of their past deeds), resting in security. (44:55).

A cup will be passed round among them (with a drink) from unsullied springs, clear, delightful to those who drink it: no heartiness will be in it, and they will not get drunk thereon. (37:45 - 47).

And as for their food and drink, it will be waited upon with trays and goblets of gold. (43:71).

Immortal youths will wait upon them with goblets, and ewers, and cups filled with water from unsullied springs. (56:17).

...And with fruit of any kind that they may choose and with the flesh of any fowl that they may desire... amidst fruit-laden lote trees, and acacias flower-clad, and shade extended, and waters gushing and fruit abounding, never-failing and never out of reach, and (they will rest on) couches raised high. (56:19 - 20; 28

- 34).

**Upon their faces thou wilt see the brightness
of bliss. (83:24),**

**Some faces will on that Day shine with bliss, wellpleased
with (the fruit) of their striving. (88:8 - 9).**

**They will be at liberty to go wherever they wish,
to meet and talk *to* whomever they wish:**

... and they will be welcomed with the greeting?

"Peace!" (14:23).

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They speak nothing but good -

**... for they were (willing to be) guided towards the
best of all tenets, and so they were guided onto the
way that leads to the One unto whom all praise is
due. (22:24).**

**And they (who are thus blest) will turn to one
another asking each other (about their past lives).**

**They will say, "Behold, aforetime, - when we were
(still living) in the midst of kith and kin - we were full
of fear (at the thought of God's displeasure): and so
God has graced us with his favour and has warded off
from us all suffering through the scorching winds (of
frustration)". (52:25-26)**

**And in gratitude to their Lord they say, "Verily,
we did invoke Him (alone) ere this; (and now He
has shown us) that He alone is truly benign, a true**

dispenser of grace." (52:28).

When they talk among themselves, they remember how they spent their time during their life in this world. They also remember matters concerning other people and what became of them:

One of them speaks thus, "Behold, I had (on earth) a close companion who was wont to ask (me) "Why,-art thou really one of those who believe it to be true (that) after we have died and become mere dust and bones we shall, forsooth, be brought to judgement?" (And) he adds, "Would you like to look (and see him)?" And then he looks and sees that (companion of his) in the midst of the blazing fire and says, "By God! Verily, thou hast almost destroyed me (too, O my erstwhile companion) - for bad it not been for my Sustainer's favour, I would surely be (now) among those who are given over (to suffering)'" (37:51 - 57).

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Then God will bless them with the company of most beautiful girls:

And (in that Paradise) We shall mate them with companions pure, most beautiful of eye. (52:20).

And (with them will be their) spouses, raised high: for behold, we shall have brought them into being, in a life renewed, having resurrected them as

virgins, full of love, well-matched with those who have attained to righteousness. (56:34 - 39).

In these gardens will be mated of modest gaze, whom neither man nor invisible being will have touched ere them (55:56).

In that state of happiness they will call out, "Limitless art Thou in Thy glory, O God!" and will be answered with the greeting, "Peace!" And their call will close with (the words), "All praise is due to God, the Sustainer of all the worlds"(10:10).

And they will say, "All praise is due to God, Who has guided us unto this. For we would certainly not have found the right path unless God had guided us! Indeed, our Sustainer's Apostle has told us the truth!" and (a voice) will call out unto them, "This is the paradise which you have inherited by virtue of your past deeds." (7:42).

No weariness shall ever touch them in this (state of bliss) and never shall they have to forego it. (15:48).

And neither shall they taste death thereafter having passed through their erstwhile death. (44:56),

... and the angels will come unto them from every gate (and will say), "Peace be upon you, because you have

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persevered!" How excellent then, this fulfilment in the hereafter. (13: 23-24).

... and there will be found all that the souls might desire, and (all that) the eyes might delight in. (43:71).

Verily, this-this indeed-is the triumph supreme. For the like of this, then let them labour, those who labour (in God's way). (37:61-62).

To that then, let all such aspire as (are willing to) aspire to things of high account. (83:26).

Oh Lord, Thy mercy we seek in everything, and thy pardon and forgiveness. Verily, You are the One who pardons and forgives. Grant us refuge Oh Lord, from the torture of hell and grant us too a safe entrance into heaven.

Hell

At the very mention of hell, we imagine a fire, similar to the element of fire we have in this world. But although they both belong to the species of fire, there is no comparison between the two.

We can notice the vast difference between these two fires when we study carefully the description of it in the Holy Quran. If the fire of hell were the same as the fire we know, of this world, it would burn everything and reduce it to coal. In hell, however, there are trees, water and shade, but they are for the

purpose of torture and suffering and not for comfort and luxury. If a person falls into a fire in this world, he meets instant death and is thus saved from the resultant pain and suffering. But a person who is condemned to the fire of hell will undergo eternal suffering:

No end shall be put to their lives, so that they could die,

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nor shall aught of the suffering caused by that (fire) be lightened for them. (35 - 36).

... and every time their skins are burnt off. We shall replace them with new skins, so that they may taste suffering (in full). (4:56).

As for the trees in hell, they are the trees of *Zaqqum*: the tree of deadly fruit... the (hellish) tree of deadly fruit.

Verily, We have caused it to be a trial for evil doers: for behold, it is a tree that grows in the very heart of the blazing fire (of hell), its fruit (as repulsive) as satan's heads. (37: 62 - 64).

And the food in hell will be the food of the sinful: [I] like molten lead will it boil in the belly, like the boiling of burning despair. (44:43).

And stinking water will be given to those who arrogantly deny the way of truth:... he shall be

made to drink the water of most bitter distress, gulping it (unceasingly), little by little, and yet hardly able to swallow it. (14:17).

So people in hell will be made to eat deadly fruit and drink stinking water, which they will, due to an insatiable thirst, drink again and again, rather like a camel. That water will boil in their stomachs like molten lead, causing all that is within their bodies, as well as their skins, to melt away. (22:20).

And the garments which they will wear in hell will be garments of fire. (22:19).

The shade in hell will be clouds of fire will they have above them and (similar) clouds beneath them. (39:16) shadows neither cooling nor soothing. (56:44).

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This will be the fate of those who place more importance on material values and the pleasures they bring, and the fate of unbelievers who deny that there is an afterlife,

For behold, in times gone by they were wont to abandon themselves wholly to the pursuit of pleasures, and would persist in heinous sinning and would say, "What' After we have died and become mere dust and bones, shall we, forsooth, be raised from the dead?". (56: 45 - 46).

Now as for those who (by their deeds) will have brought wretchedness upon themselves, (they shall live) in the fire, where they will have (nothing but) moans and sobs (to relieve their pain) therein to abide as long as the heavens and the earth endure - unless thy Sustainer wills it otherwise: for verily, thy Sustainer is a sovereign doer of whatever He wills. (11: 106).

Entry into hell

When the reckoning is over and judgement has been pronounced on unbelievers regarding their punishment in hell, groups of them will be led there. Hell itself will be 'furious' with them for persistent disbelief in God and the messages of the prophets. The keepers of hell will be baffled by the foolishness and arrogance of such people. In this context, the Quran states:

When they are cast into that (hell), they hear its breath 'n drawing as it boils up, well-nigh bursting with fury; (and) every time a host (of such sinners) is flung into it, its keepers will ask them, "Has no warner ever come to you?" that juncture they will confess, "Yes, a warner did indeed come to us, but we gave him the lie and Said 'Never has God sent down anything (by way of revelation!)' " Thus

the angels will tell them, "You (self-styled warners) are but lost in a great delusion".

So they admit that they turned a deaf ear and refused to exercise their minds and that, had they taken heed of the preachings and contemplated both within themselves and the world around them, they would have found proof of God's existence and believed in Him, and would have followed the path shown by the prophets, and, as a consequence, would not have been condemned to hell. And they will add, "Had we but listened (to those warnings), or (at least) used our own reason, we would not (now) be among those who are destined for the blazing fire." (67: 7-10).

Hell as a prison

God the Almighty has described hell as abode: with seven gates leading into it, each gate receiving its allotted share of sinners (15:44), and that it will be: a fire kindled by *God*, which will rise over the (guilty) hearts; verily it will close in upon them in endless columns. (104:6-9).

Those who have been assigned to hell will be tied together and flung into a tight space, and when they are flung, linked (all) together, into a tight space within, they will pray for extinction there and then! (25: 12 -14).

Behold, for those who deny the truth we have

readied chains and shackles, a blazing flame.

(76:4).

Efforts to escape

God has granted man with a certain life span in this world, the mental capacity to choose which course of action to take and the willpower to enable him to implement the course of action he decides upon. Some people proceed along the 'wrong

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road', and having reached their destination realise that, ultimately, it is of no value for them and start looking for ways of escape. Such people may swear that they will live a Godly life, as long as they are given a second chance like a student who has taken an exam, failed it and is sitting for it for a second time. But it may not be such a simple matter. As God the Almighty states in the Quran:

Verily We have brought them a scripture which we expound with knowledge, a guidance and a mercy for a people who believe. Await they aught save the fulfilment thereof? On the day when the fulfilment thereof cometh, those were before forgetful thereof will say, "The messengers of our Lord did bring the truth! Have we any intercessors that they may intercede for us? Or can we be returned (to life on earth) that we may act otherwise than we used to act?"

They have lost their souls, and that which they devised hath failed them (7: 52 - 53).

He whom God sendeth astray, for him there is no protecting friend after Him. And thou (Muhammad) wilt see the evil - doers when they see doom. "(How)," they say, "is there any way of return?" (42:44).

And they cry for help there, (saying), "Our Lord! •Please us! We will do right, not (the wrong) that we used ^ do. Did not we grant you a life long enough for him who Wiected to reflect therein? And the warner came unto you. Now taste (the flavour of your deeds). For evil-doers tve no helper. (35:37).

**In desperation, these men seek the help of the keepers of in the hope that they may rescue them. And those in the fire say unto the guards of hell,
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"Entreat your Lord that He relieve us of a day of the torment." They say, "Came not your messenger unto you with clear proofs?" They say, "Yea." They say, "Then do ye pray, although the prayer of disbelievers is in vain." (40: 49 -50). Still in despair they turn again to another source: the angel who rules over hell.

And they cry, "Oh master! Let thy Lord make

an end of us." He saith, "Lo! here ye must remain." (43:77).

Then they consider offering a ransom.

And though those who do wrong possess all that is in the earth, and therewith as much again, they verily will seek to ransom themselves therewith on the Day of Resurrection from the awful doom. And there will appear unto them, from their Lord, that wherewith they be never reckoned. And the evils that they earned will appear unto them and that whereat they used to scoff will surround them. (39:47 - 48).

And for them are hooked rods of iron. Whenever, in their anguish, they would go forth from thence they are driven back therein and (it is said unto them), "Taste the doom of burning. Lo! God will cause those who believe and do good works to enter gardens underneath which rivers; flow, wherein they will be allowed armlets of gold, and pearls, and their raiment therein will be silk." (22: 21 - 23).

Harmony and Disharmony

Those who dwell in heaven will be recognised by their harmonious state of being.

They shall be free of unworthy thoughts or lurking

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sense of injury and they shall rest as brethren, facing one

another (in love) upon thrones of happiness. (15:47).

As for those in hell, they will be forever arguing and quarrelling.

Every time a nation entereth, it curseth its sister (nation) till when they have all been made to follow one another thither, the last of them saith unto the first of them, "Our Lord! these led us astray, so give them double torment of the fire." He saith, "For each on there is double (torment), but ye know not." And the first of them saith unto the last of them, "Ye were not whit better than us, so taste the doom for what ye used to earn." (7: 38 - 39).

Here is an army rushing blindly with you. (Those who are already in the fire say), "No word of welcome for them. Lo! They will roast at the fire".

They say, "Nay, but you (misleaders) for you there is no word of welcome, ye prepared this for us (by your misleading). Now hapless is the plight." They say, "Our Lord! Whoever did prepare this for us, oh, give him double portion of the fire!" And they say, "what aileth us that we behold not men whom we were wont to count among the wicked? Did we take them (wrongly) for a laughing stock, or have our eyes missed them? Lo! that is very truth: the wrangling of the dwellers in the fire." (38:55-64).

Dialogues Between the Inmates of Paradise

and Hell

The Holy Quran states that the inmates of paradise will be able to see the inmates of hell, and communicate with them.

And the dwellers of the Garden cry unto the dwellers of the fire, "We have found that which our Lord promised us (to be) the truth. Have ye (too) found that which your Lord

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promised the truth?" They say, "Yea, verily". And a crier in between them crieth, "The curse of God is on evil-doers. Who (debar) men from the path of God and would have it crooked, and who are disbelievers in the Last Day." (7:44 - 45).

And the dwellers of the fire cry out unto the dwellers of the garden, "Pour on us some water or some of that wherewith God hath provided you." They say, "Lo! God hath forbidden both to disbelievers (in His guidance). Who took their religion for a sport and pastime, and whom the life of the world beguiled. So this day We have forgotten them even as they forgot the meeting of this their Day and as they used to deny Our tokens." (7:50 - 51).

Al-A'raf (The Heights)

The verses coming in the chapter entitled Al

A'raf, indicate that this title denotes a place - a point of transit between heaven and hell, known as the Heights.

It is said that it will be a halting place for those who do not fit into the category of either heaven or hell. In other words, their good actions do not merit their entry into heaven, yet their bad actions were judged not to be sufficiently bad for them to be condemned to hell.

People in At-A'raf will witness the beauty of paradise and talk with those dwelling there, yearning to enter themselves. ? They will also witness hell and converse with its inmates, There will be a veil between the inmates of paradise and the inmates of hell.

And on the Heights will be men who would know everyone by his marks. They will call out to the companions of the Garden, "Peace on you". They will not

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When their eyes shall be turned towards the companions of the fire, they will say, "Our Lord! Send us not to the company of the wrong-doers."

(7: 46 - 47).

They will see people in hell whom they knew in this world; people who in this world were very mighty and proud of their wealth. The popularity and support they enjoyed through all this made them behave in a proud manner and commit unjust acts. To them the people of Al-A'raf will say, "What has your amassing (of wealth) availed you, and all the false pride of your past?" (7:48).

They will realise that their riches are of no avail and will have no influence whatsoever over their agony, and what's more that they cannot take those riches with them. When we die, we enter the grave alone, without anyone at all by our side, leaving everyone we knew on earth behind us, We are alone during our resurrection, and we will be alone for the reckoning.

But even though we all have to face death, we tend not to think about it. We are unable to envision it physically, through our senses, nor can picture it in our imagination.

We should therefore ask God to open our eyes, so that we can see His Divine Truth and be enlightened in our vision, so that we may proceed on the path towards Him. We should pray to be protected from temptations, both seen and hidden, that might harm us. And we must remember to ask for His

**acceptance, and to be protected from His anger. For.
in the end, only God can forgive us and save us from
our agony.**

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CHAPTER IX

BELIEF IN DESTINY

Destiny and Divine Will

**The Holy Quran refers to destiny and divine will in
several verses in different chapters, some of which
are quoted below:**

**And there is not a thing hut its (sources and)
treasures (exhaustible) are with Us. But We only send
down thereof in due and ascertainable measures.
(15:21).**

**Verily, all things have We created in
proportion and measures. (54:49).**

**...and bestowed blessings on the earth, and
measured therein all things to give them nourishment
in due proportion. (41:10).**

**And the moon. We have measured for her
mansions to traverse... (36:39).**

**It is He who created all things, and ordered them in
due**

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proportions. (25:2).

Every single thing is before His sight, in (due)

proportions. (13:8).

It is clear from these quotes that destiny, (*qadar* in Arabic), means the laws, regulations, systems, functions and operations that have been laid down by the Almighty for this universe. Every movement and non-movement of all that exists in this universe has been predestined since eternity.

I would like to make an analogy here regarding the question of destiny and Divine Will-a similitude-To God applies the highest similitude. (16:60).

You have probably noticed that most multistorey buildings have boards outside with the names written on them of the engineers and contractors who designed and undertook the construction. The engineer is in charge of the destiny of the building : his role is to decide on the details of the building, such as the quality and quantity of materials, the thickness of the walls and the numbers of doors and windows it should have. The contractor, however, is responsible for the 'Divine Will', in that he executes the work as required.

Destiny and Divine Will in actual fact, belong to God alone. He may alter our destiny, in response to our prayers and charitable acts, in the same way as the engineer may alter the plans of the building, in response to various needs.

God alone determines our destiny, and only He

can alter it in response to our prayers. If all human actions had been destined since eternity-with no scope for change, alteration or option, there would have been no need to send prophets to this world, nor to launch Jihad (holy war) against unbelievers, and

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to invoke the Almighty.

The Prophets, the righteous Caliphs and the reformers of the Ummah in every period, have always sought to banish evil and achieve what is good for mankind.

Reward and Punishment

The analogy we have just looked at explains the concept of destiny and applies to the whole of creation, including human beings. But there is another issue with regard to human beings, which is much debated and argued about, and that is reward and punishment. And the question brought up time and again is, - how could there be such a thing as reward and punishment if our lives are predestined anyway? Especially if the Divine will is absolute and unchanging, it doesn't make sense!

Before we begin to look at this question in detail, it is important to differentiate from the start between man's physical existence and the attributes of God and divine action. The human mind is unable to grasp this

concept, save through what has been made known to us through revelations.

Freedom of Will

First I would like to discuss this subject with regard to the realities of existence, as we see and feel it, and then I shall refer to relevant texts.

In reality, man has freedom. He is able to assess material matters, and differentiate between good and bad through the power of his intellect. Through his will power, man is able to either do good, or make mistakes. Every thinking person knows that prayer is good and drinking too much alcohol is bad; when someone sets out from home he can either go to a Mosque and pray, or go to a pub and get drunk.

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By the same token, nobody can dispute the fact that I am able to lift my arm unless I have badly injured it or unless it is paralysed. I may raise it either to give money to a poor man, or to hit an innocent person. But are these two actions one and the same? Surely the action of giving money to a poor man deserves a reward, whereas the assault on an innocent person merits punishment.

A student can choose whether to go out of the town the evening before his examination, or to spend

the evening quietly at home, revising. In a case like this, we cannot sympathise with the student who wasted his time if he fails his exam and says his failure is unfair. And if the other student passes his exam, we cannot regard this fact as a mere fluke.

Predestination of Human Will

I am able to move my arm, because God has given me the power to do so. However, I cannot control the muscles of my heart and stomach.

One student may be very intelligent and able to grasp what he learns, just by reading his books through once - and then afterwards he may get pleasure from a hobby. Another student, however, may be a bit of a 'plodder', needing all day to understand and memorise his lessons.

In the same way, one student may come from a family background where learning is encouraged and an appropriate environment is provided, whereas another student may not be given the same kind of support. His family may not be interested in intellectual pursuits-and the environment might be , noisy, making it hard for him to study. The choice of his circumstances is beyond him. As far as he knows, he has not been able to choose his parents, the ideal time for his lifespan

or the ideal family background. All these matters are beyond our reach,

We cannot change the shape of our face, for example, or alter our height in order to improve our appearance. All such aspects of our lives are predestined.

Free Will Within Human Limitations

Man, however, is free within his limitations. His free will itself is not affected by the fact that certain aspects of his life have been pre-ordained.

Human beings are rather like vehicles: the capacity of the engine determines the speed of the vehicle. A lorry cannot go as fast as a racing car. A saloon car is supposed to be used on smooth roads, and not to be driven up steps or through walls. A vehicle is not classified as something else just because something goes wrong with it. It can never, for example, be classified as a mass of rock.

Similarly, man is not deprived of his free will, just because he faces certain difficulties which, within his limitations as a human being, are difficult to overcome. He still has choice, and can pursue his path as best he can.

Man, unlike God, does not have the power to do as he wants, beyond a certain point.

Reward and Punishment Are Corollary to Free Will

Punishment is a result of the course of action we

have chosen to follow using our own free will, which means that we are not punished for doing wrong if that choice was made under great stress or difficulty.

We are only taken to task regarding what we have consciously chosen to do. Whatever good a man has done will

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stand in his favour and whatever mistakes he has made will stand against him. God will not burden a human being with more than he is able to bear, and He does not ignore even the tiniest good action.

If 'man-made' law courts with their relative sense of justice can assess and judge a man by taking his background and circumstances into consideration, how can the same factors be ignored in the Divine law court-a place of absolute justice? Will the same judgement be made in, say, a juvenile court, on a child who comes from a broken home and a poor background as a child from good parents, brought up in a secure home in ideal surroundings? Will both delinquents be judged in the same way?

Parameters of Justice

Applying the parameters of man-made justice to God is an error made by most theologians. I personally became aware of this after a certain

incident. I think it has a moral behind it, even though it may seem out of context here.

In 1931 I was working as a teacher at a primary school in Syria. At that time I was young and enthusiastic, but I was also very assertive, full of my own importance and I held dogmatic views. At that time I started to question the idea of fate and destiny, a matter which I discussed with various educated men, but could not get a satisfactory answer. My arrogance drove me into having violent arguments with them, which must have disturbed their peace of mind.

I continued to hold these views, until one day I had to cane a pupil for bad conduct at school, (in those days caning was permitted). The pupil reacted rudely and insolently, shouting, "This is unjust! you are an oppressor!"

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When I heard his words, the cane fell from my hands. For a moment I was transported away from the school, and surrounded by complete darkness. And then it seemed as if a lamp had been lit for me.

"That boy accused me of behaving unjustly because I caned him - whereas I consider it perfectly fair," I thought to myself. "The action itself is unchanged, though the points of view held about it are

different. And if this pupil were to complain to his parents about what had happened, they might tell him that I had acted justly, and that the caning had been for his own good! So, if a pupil cannot apply his immature viewpoint to that of his teacher's concept of justice, how on earth can I apply my man-made parameters of justice to those of Almighty God?"

Could it not be that an action which I consider unfair is in fact the very essence of justice? It would be like a sick boy complaining that it is rude of the doctor to give him an injection, whereas the boy's father feels the doctor is performing a worthy act. The difference in viewpoint is that the boy is looking at it from the angle of his pain and suffering, while the father sees it as a way of restoring his son's health.

A judge cannot give a verdict regarding a case, unless he studies it from all aspects. We tend to judge matters from one particular viewpoint and often arrive at the wrong conclusions.

Imagine that you and a friend go for a walk in the country and, as you lose your way, you accept a lift you are offered from someone driving a smart car. But when you're in the car your friend takes out a knife, and starts to slash the car seat. How could he justify this? Isn't this kind of behaviour rude and called for? Of course it is! But if, later, someone tells you at street gangs have been stealing every smart car on the road

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and only sparing those with torn seats, then your friend's behaviour would be justified. In fact the owner of the car might well have done the same thing in order to protect his vehicle!

That is exactly what happens in a parable narrated in the Holy Quran, about Moses and Khidar (18: 60 - 82), when Khidar deliberately made a hole in the boat in which they crossed from one shore to the other. He also did many other strange things which puzzled Moses and consequently made him break his vow to Khidar not to ask questions.

The moral of this story is that one should not judges matter without first looking at it from all angles.

In the Light of the Holy Quran and the Traditions

Before going on to discuss the question of destiny and Divine will in the light of the Holy Quran and the Traditions, I would like to remind readers about the following basic principles:

1- The human mind can only function using these texts as a basis. It cannot grasp the reality of destiny in detail on its OWTI, because, as stated earlier, the mind is unable to delve into metaphysical aspects. Therefore, any discussion

that is not supported by the texts should be avoided.

2 - We should always be aware that the Holy Quran is the basis, the terra firma-of all our beliefs. So, if there is any contradiction between a Quranic verse and a Tradition based on the authority of a single source and there is no way of reconciling the two in a satisfactory way, we should opt for the Quranic verse.

3 - There can be no clear text, either in the Holy Quran or in

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the Traditions, which denies any physical reality because Our Lord Who revealed the Holy Quran is the Creator of every reality, and Our Lord does not contradict his own creation.

4 - The verses in the Holy Quran which carry the meaning of predestination and therefore denial of man's free will, are, in my opinion, verses which have a bearing on both the nobility and the corruptibility of man. Here are some verses we can consider, regarding that theme:

He it is Who fashioneth you in the wombs, as pleaseth Him. there is no God save Him, Almighty, the wise. (3:36).

For example, a newly born baby girl cannot be

changed into baby boy, and we cannot change the colour of our skin.

Thy Lord bringeth to pass what He willeth and chooseth. They have never any choice. Glorified be God and exalted above all that they associate (with Him). (28:68).

And there are verses which refer to global events beyond human control:

Have ye seen that which ye cultivate? Is it ye who foster it, or are we the fosterer? If we willed, we verily could make it chaff, then wouldst ye cease not exclaim. (56: 63 - 65).

If God touch thee with affliction, there is none that can relieve thee therefrom, save Him, and if He touch thee with good fortune (there is none that can impair it), for He is able to do all things. (6:17).

There are verses which refer to circumstances which are not of man's making and which may lead to develop either

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noble or corruptible aspects of his character:

And a soul and him Who perfected it and inspired it (with conscience of) what is wrong for it and (what is) right for it. (91: 7-8).

In the verses dealing with guidance, we find the word 'guidance' used to mean 'direction of the

Almighty':

Did we not assign unto him two eyes and a tongue and lips, and guide him to the parting of mountain ways? (90: 8 -10).

Lo! We have shown him the way whether he be grateful or disbelieving. (76:3).

We notice in the above verses that there are factors which are not created by man,, but may have an influence in shaping him either into a noble or corrupt person. As stated earlier, God does not take his worshippers to task on such issues. It is impossible to plan something inevitable, and then blame the person who, as a consequence, behaves in a certain way.

These texts have formed a battleground for various 'breakaway' sects, who misunderstood their meaning and therefore misapplied them. These groups should, on the contrary, have done as follows:

1- They should have made a distinction between the verses dealing with Divine Will, Divine Power and God's disposal of the affairs of His kingdom, and the verses dealing with reward and punishment.

2 - The texts should have been considered as a whole, and not broken down into parts.

Anyone who studies the texts in their

totality will realise that the Holy Quran grants man Freedom and free will which may result in

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either reward or punishment.

Lo! God disdaineth not to coin the similitude even of a gnat. Those who believe know that it is the truth from their Lord. But those who disbelieve say: What doth God wish (to teach) by such a similitude? He misleadeth many thereby and He guideth many thereby; and He misleadeth thereby only miscreants. (2:26).

A superficial look at these verses may well give the impression that, like everything else, guidance and misguidance are divinely ordained: some are destined to be misguided while others are to be blessed with guidance. But this impression will soon change after studying the following verses:

This is the Scripture whereof there is no doubt, a guidance unto those who ward off (evil). (2:2).

It is clear that God does not take it upon Himself to actually grant guidance or misguidance. This is a matter on which every individual takes his own decision. If a person lives in awe of God and in Godconsciousness, the Holy Quran will be his source of

guidance. However, anyone who gets involved in matters which are harmful to him will not be guided. Anyone still having any lingering doubts, asking, "How do I know whether God has placed me among the guided or the misguided?" can find the answer in the following verses:

This is the Scripture whereof there is no doubt, a guidance unto those who ward off (evil), who believe in the unseen and establish worship, and spend of that we have bestowed upon them. And who believe in that which is revealed unto thee (Muhammad) and that which was

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revealed before thee, and are certain of the hereafter. (2:2 -4).

Those who break the covenant of God after ratifying it, iid sever that which God ordered to be joined and (who) make

mischief in the earth: Those are they who are the losers. (2:27).

It is clear therefore that there is no predestination of man's free will, and that free will is corrected with certain attributes and actions falling within the scope of human volition.

For example, you may believe in a world beyond the reach of human perception, pray regularly and

spend your time and money in the path of God; on the other hand, you may separate yourself from God, saw disruption and spread corruption on earth. Any of these actions are within your capacity. However, if you carry out the first three, you will be among those who are God-fearing and therefore you will be guided. But if you are guilty of the latter three, you will be considered as one who lost his way and whose lot is misguidance.

A Meaningless Discussion

At this point many people ask, "Did I go wrong because it was God's will, or could I have done things differently - in His way?" or, "Was I responsible for my own action?" and so on. Such arguments have filled countless volumes of books written by theologians. But such books are meaningless, because we cannot compare God with human beings, neither can the human mind make assessments of God and His attributes.

The Almighty is not questioned regarding His actions; it is we who are questioned by him for our actions. And there is no doubt about God's justice. We must be responsible for ourselves and look within regarding our behaviour and seek to

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direct our will power to do good. We should

refrain from discussions regarding God, in the same way as they were avoided by our much respected forefathers.

Destiny as an Excuse

Many people who make mistakes in their lives blame their destiny. In such a case if you were to ask a murderer, "Why did you kill that man?" He would reply, "Because it was ordained that I should do so." Such an argument holds no water for two reasons:

1- Reward and punishment are connected to our actions, the motives behind them and our desires.

No murderer can justify his crime by claiming that murdering people was ordained for him - as though he knew what was inscribed for him in the 'imperishable tablet', and took that as a basis for committing his crime, in other words, he cannot claim that he carried out orders, according to what was 'written' as his destiny. In fact what happened was that he fell prey to negative influences; in other words, he fell for the temptation of the devil-

Polytheists also sought to justify their beliefs by making use of such an excuse:

Had God so willed, we would not have ascribed divinity to aught but Him. (6:148).

The Divine answer to this was:

Have you any (certain) knowledge which you could proffer to us? (6:148).

In other words, "How did you know before you became polytheists that polytheism was ordained for you? And did you opt for the belief in the Oneness of God and

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realise that it was forbidden for you."

2- If those taking refuge in destiny were being true to themselves, they would gladly accept whatever God ordains for them-poverty, sickness, starvation, financial and material loss, etc. - but this is not the case! Such people do not resign themselves to their fate. On the contrary, they often do all they can to accumulate wealth, fight sickness and keep away from starving. They cannot endure any loss, such as loss of someone close to them, loss of wealth, etc. They use every means possible to enjoy worldly pleasures and protect themselves from pain and suffering.

Why then do such people not make use of the power of their intellect to counteract their carnal desires and restrain from what is forbidden because they are aware of the resulting punishment?

Our Belief in Destiny vs. That of Our

Forefathers

Many opposers to Islam accuse Muslims of being lethargic and lacking enthusiasm for their cause, and relate this attitude to their belief in destiny. To some extent, they are right, but this is due to the wrong notion of this concept, and one which was formed by latterday Muslims.

A great number of Muslims used this misconceived idea of destiny to cover up a multitude of sins, and as an excuse for laziness and inactivity. But our revered forefathers had, on the contrary, made destiny a springboard for *work: jihad*.

We read of the principle which states that a certain livelihood has been allotted to each one of us: "What is ordained for you as your share will come to you even if you are weak and powerless. You cannot, even with all your power

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and might, take what has been given to another as your share."

This was interpreted by some Muslims to mean that as we have no choice in what we do, we may as well give up working for a livelihood and be idle. People like this expect

the ^heavens to open one day and shower them with riches.

They are the kind of people who embark on a journey without money , or provisions.

However, our forefathers read and interpreted this maxim quite differently. They took it as a springboard for work and

action, and therefore made a great effort to find a useful means . of employing themselves and acquire wealth in a lawful manner. They strived their utmost in all they did, and

with that knowledge were content to accept their lot. They never felt resentful, nor did they complain to the Almighty, and they did not envy those who had achieved more.

Wealth

did not make them arrogant and poverty did not drive them to despair.

As we know death is inevitable, we do not always exercise prudence and discretion. We may not commit crimes, but often, nonetheless, we avoid certain responsibilities and blame the result on 'our destiny.' An example to illustrate that kind of behaviour would be of someone who drives his car too fast, knocks someone down - and then describes it as "an act of destiny."

Our forefathers were also aware of the

inevitability of death. But they believed that as no one dies before his appointed hour there is no point in, say jumping into a blazing fire or stabbing oneself to death! So they got on with their lives, saying, "We should work and achieve what is acceptable to God. Let's strive in His path, and not fear death, just because it is inevitable. It has an appointed hour which cannot be put back or forward. So let us give up what deters us from

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following in God's way and convey the message of truth to all." Consequently, our forefathers fought valiantly for the sake of truth and obeyed no one but God.

So, while we understand the fact that everything is destined, we do not always pay attention to the norms that God has laid down for this universe and the laws of nature, all of which He has made as a source of good and evil.

Our forefathers, however, studied these laws seriously and established themselves as pioneers in the sciences. They grasped the meaning of those sciences, and evolved ways of using them for the good of mankind. But our negligence has caused us Muslims to fall from the heights of glory to the depths of

oblivion.

Our forefathers were, supported by their faith, masters in every field in this world. But we have let others be masters over us. Our forefathers ruled a third of the civilised world, with the strength of the word of truth. But, alas, we have allowed our enemy to conquer our homeland - not with the weapon of Truth, but with the weapon of falsehood.

Glorifying Our Forefathers

Some of us, when we find that every aspect of our life seems to be going wrong, or that we have been humiliated in some way, let our minds wander back to the power and prestige enjoyed by our forefathers. The thought of that glory turns our present despair into hope - hope with which we build bridges between the past and the present. In this frame of mind we tend to despise *our* contemporaries and glorify the dead and departed, and that reaction forms the basis for the practice of praising the dead and departed, pinning all our hopes on them. We expect help

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and assistance with our difficulties and build grand mausoleums in their honour.

Our veneration for the dead, however, is growing similar to

the beliefs and practices of pagan days. Even though our religion forbids it, we have even begun giving offerings and making vows to those tombs, in order to seek intercession from our forefathers, Even though we know that those who are dead and buried have no material or tangible means to fulfil our requests, we beg them to intercede on our behalf, both for good and bad purposes.

We continue to uphold such wrong beliefs because of the decadence of our present compared to the glory of our past.

Confusing Issues

Our misunderstanding of the question of destiny led to the I wrong conclusion regarding what is within the scope of man's free will and what is beyond it.

This confusion first appeared in the various schools of thought among theologians. Some claimed that man has no free will because he has no jurisdiction on several matters, including control of the muscles of his heart, the choice of his parents and having an environment to his liking. But they forgot that God has granted man control over several of his muscles, and that God has given him the power of intellect which he can

use, to a certain extent, to rectify what he finds wrong with his upbringing and his surroundings. However, the opposite, and rather exaggerated point of view was expressed by other theologians. They placed far more importance on man's free will than is to be found in reality, and consequently confusion arose between the issues of reward and punishment.

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They forgot that God does not make us answerable for our actions, except within the limits of our freedom and free will. And, as stated earlier, we are not taken to task for actions committed under great duress. Besides this, these theologians, as we also saw earlier, confused certain issues with regard to Divine justice, forgetting that it cannot be compared to human justice.

Therefore, the safest course to follow regarding the question of belief in destiny and on all other connected issues, is to follow the basic source - namely, the Holy Quran, and to proceed on the path shown by our revered forefathers, who were among the companions of the Prophet, (peace be upon him), and the companions of the companions. We should avoid futile discussions, such as those based on superficial and rather primitive Greek

philosophy.

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CHAPTER X

BELIEF IN THE UNSEEN

As stated earlier, in the chapter on Codes of Belief, we are unable to perceive everything that exists in this world with our senses. What's more, there are many other worlds in existence which we are not aware of, the closest example being 'spirit'. How can we deny the existence of spirit, when it keeps everyone alive? But has anyone ever known the true essence of spirit? Of course not. In other words, the world that we can see and perceive is described by the Holy Quran as the 'seen' world, and the world that is beyond our sense of perception is the 'unseen', metaphysical world. Every human being, with no exception, endorses and expresses belief in the seen world. Even animals perceive this world with their senses. Therefore, no one can claim superiority or precedence over anyone else in this matter, because this belief forms part of what we called 'essential knowledge.' However, 'superiority' is granted to those who, on the basis of trust in the truth of the Message conveyed to them, believe in and claim that the unseen world exists.

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It is this quality which gives superiority to the God fearing over others. And it is the very first quality emphasised in the Holy Quran:

Who believe in the Unseen...

(2:3)

How Can We Believe in the Unseen?

How can we believe in the unseen when God has not given us the sense perception to perceive it?

If we were left to depend only on our senses and power of intellect in order to draw our conclusions, we would still be groping in the dark, and remain ignorant about the metaphysical world. But God, in His wisdom and mercy, has not left the human intellect in its state of helplessness. On the contrary. He has provided it with the necessary guidance and information. But this information cannot be obtained from within the self. It can be found in external sources - sources which are not connected with intuition, spiritual inspiration, intellectual enlightenment or powers of reasoning. And neither can it be evolved from human ability alone.

It can only be obtained through one of the following three methods

1- God might communicate it to man either through an inspiration, or a dream or through any other method of transmission which does not

involve any effort on our.; part. It is something that cannot be intellectualised in such a way that we can feel and express it.

2- A prophet to whom revelation is sent, may hear it without being able to know or locate the original source of the sound.

3 - God may choose a human being to receive His Message

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through one of his angels, with the command that this Message be conveyed to mankind,

In this context the Holy Quran says:

And it is not given to mortal man that God should speak unto him otherwise than through sudden inspiration, or (by a voice, as it were), from behind a veil, or by sending an apostle to reveal, by His leave, whatever He will (to reveal). (42:51).

The Unseen

The Divine Revelation has described the unseen in detail, and part of our faith is to trust this knowledge. The unseen includes the angels, the *jinn*, the revealed Books, the prophets, the Day of Judgement, the Day of Reckoning, when we shall receive reward or punishment and belief in destiny. We are also asked to believe everything that is mentioned in the Holy Quran regarding the creation of

heaven and earth, the creation of man, and all the other information it contains.

A Doubt Removed...

Materialists will refuse to believe in anything which they do not perceive with their senses. Our response to this is contained in Code Three of the Codes of Belief which states, "We are not in a position to deny the existence of whatever is beyond our senses."

In other words, just because we cannot sense certain things, this does not mean we can deny their existence. And also, if you remember. Code Three states that, "Certitude transmitted by an authentic person gives us a good enough proof as through that which we can see or feel."

Since the honesty of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon

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him) in conveying the Divine Message revealed to him has been established for us, we Muslims firmly believe in the unseen.

Classification of the Unseen

We can classify the unseen into several categories:

1- The first category of the unseen includes all the events which occurred in the lifetime of past generations. It is for this reason that the story of

Joseph is referred to in the Holy Quran as: an account of something that was beyond the reach of thy perceptions. We now reveal unto thee.

Our Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him) had not witnessed the events of this story. It was only witnessed by the sons of Israel, i.e., the sons of Jacob.

Such information has therefore been classified by the Almighty as something "beyond the reach of perception", or as "stories of what happened unseen".

2- The second category involves events which mankind would have observed, had the human race been in existence at their time of occurrence. For example, all the events that took place on earth before the birth of the human race, information regarding all the creatures that existed on earth, and the story regarding the creation of Adam, the father of mankind. The only means that human beings have had to learn about these events has been through revelation.

3- Thirdly, in this category of the Unseen, we can group all those matters which cannot be perceived by the senses - issues which cannot be reasoned through the intellect, nor

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comprehended by using the power of imagination. The Attributes of God, creations He has hidden from our sight, the angels, judgement and how it will take place, and the consequent reward and punishment.

Another Doubt Removed

Some people might say regarding the realm of the unseen, that God has reserved certain pieces of knowledge for Himself. For example, the causing of rains to occur or the knowledge of the sex of a child in the womb. But how does the weather forecaster predict the weather every day whether the skies will be clear, or whether it will rain? And how does science discover the sex of a child in the mother's womb?

The answers to all this are as follows:

1 - God revealed the Holy Quran, and He created this universe and everything that has ever happened in it. It is therefore impossible to find a text in the Holy Quran which contradicts any physical reality. Whenever we think we have come across such a text, we will find after further scrutiny that the real meaning is something other than what we understood.

2- As for the weather forecast, it informs us about weather conditions after the causes have been examined. For example we may be told there

will be rain in the south west. If we study the laws of this universe, which have been laid down by God, we understand that this rain is caused by a breeze which comes from the side of the Atlantic Ocean, passes through the Straits of Gibraltar and collides with a block of still air, resulting in the ' formations of clouds, which cause the rain.

We can compare this kind of prediction with the example

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of someone who sees the postman approaching his house, and tries to predict how long it will take him to reach the door. He may predict that it will take him three minutes. Or we can take the example of someone looking through binoculars and observing vehicles approaching, and then telling others about them, in advance. Such knowledge is not knowledge of the unseen. It is merely information gained in advance of other people. It can be compared to the prediction of the sex of a baby after it takes shape as a foetus.

But the knowledge about rain clouds, the falling of rain on land which God has deemed to be dry, the prevention of rain on land which He deemed to be

blessed with rain and the knowledge of the sex of an embryo when it is still a sperm, are all matters which belong to the realm of the unseen.

The Angels, the Books and the Prophets

Belief in the angels, the Books and the prophets is one of the pre-requisites of faith, without which no one will be considered to be a believer.

Angels are God's messengers to the prophets and the prophets are messengers of God to mankind. The Books are the messages conveyed by the angels to the prophets and by the prophets to mankind.

Divine Revelation: Its Possibility and Necessity

Divine revelation is a rational possibility.

This is because God is capable of creating the angels, nominating the prophets and laying down laws.

Once the human intellect believes in the existence of God, His ability and power, it cannot deny this possibility-

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Belief in the Unseen

Revelation has occurred because the news of its occurrence

has been conveyed to us with certitude. We stated earlier that "Certitude through news conveyed from an authentic

person is as good as certitude by seeing and feeling." This is why we believe in what is communicated to us with authenticity, in the same way-as we believe in what we see and hear.

Divine revelation is necessary because, without it, mankind would be engrossed in a material life, oblivious of the fact that there is an afterlife. Without such revelation, human beings would behave like animals - eating, drinking and indulging in carnal pleasures. They would have no contact with their Lord. nor would they seek to work for the life hereafter.

If it were not for Divine revelation, man would be deprived of moral values and nobility of character. He might live in a world of illusion, drawing inspiration from various theories on social ethics. But any system based on social ethics alone, is like a palace built on quicksand. Man is by nature self-centred and seeks to satisfy his own needs and protect himself from harm and does not do anything which does not give him pleasure or some sort of gain.

Say someone who only has fifty pence with which to buy himself dinner notices a charity box in aid of orphans. Would he be willing to donate his fifty pence towards that cause in a discreet manner, not telling

anyone what he has done - and forgoing his dinner, unless he were a believer in God and the Day of Judgement?

A believer would certainly give money in such a case, and would be aware that God is watching him, and that if he donates his fifty pence he will be rewarded with the equivalent of, say, fifty thousand pounds on the Day of Judgement. Only

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a believer carries out charitable actions, without caring whether people notice what he has done or not, or whether they express gratitude, or reward him or not.

And only a believer restrains himself from doing what he knows is wrong, regardless of whether he is alone or in the company of others. But the person who does good in order to gain recognition will not do so unless he is sure of obtaining a good name and fame. Likewise, the person who will not commit a crime for fear of being caught by the police or shown up in the public eye, will nonetheless act without compunction if he knows he is alone.

If God were to take people to task on the Day of Judgement, for the mistakes they have made in their lives and had not sent prophets to teach mankind the Divine laws, they would certainly

protest, saying, "Oh Lord- if only Thou hadst sent us an apostle, we should certainly have followed Thy signs before we were humbled and put to shame." (20:134).

And they might also claim that had the Message been sent to them sooner they would have abided by it, and had they known the Divine law they would have adhered to it.

The Holy Quran states that the apostles gave good news as well as a warning so that... mankind after (the coming) of the apostles, should have no plea against God. (4:165).

A Doubt Removed

Some people ask questions such as, "Why hasn't God -; guided everyone to the path of paradise? And why does he give us sexual desires, and then punish us for committing adultery? Why does He infuse in us the desire for money, and then takes us to task for holding on to it?"

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Belief in the Unseen

We can take the sort of questions asked by school children as an analogy to the above. For example they might ask, "Why don't teachers give us answers to our exam questions at the beginning of the year? Why are exam questions kept secret? Why are we asked to prepare for exams?," and so on.

Needless to say the purpose of keeping the questions secret is to ensure that students study the whole syllabus, as prescribed. If the exam questions were made known to the students beforehand, the examinations themselves would become a pointless exercise.

This world is a testing ground in the same way.

We are given certain tests and given different problems, where the faithful and the God-fearing stand apart from the unfaithful and the unbelievers, and the righteous stand apart from the corrupt. In other words, were it not for the hurdles in a race, you would not be able to distinguish a horse who runs fast from the one who is lazy.

If God had so willed. He could have created the whole of mankind as one nation. He could also, if He had wished, have "made all mankind show absolute obedience to Him, like the angels. But, He willed differently, and nothing can change .what He wills, and it is not for us to question what He does.

God has absolute control over us: unto Him we belong 3rd unto Him we shall return. There is no other God but Him. , He can, if He wills, cause us great hardship and unhappiness, and if He wishes He may pardon us. So we pray to Him to I grant us pardon and mercy, and we seek refuge in Him from His punishment.

**The truth is that we cannot save ourselves from tus?
Punishment unless He pardons us; and He alone
grants that**

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lo Islam pardon.

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CHAPTER XI

THE ANGELS

**True followers of Islam believe in the existence
of angels, as affirmed in the Holy Quran. The
information we are given about them is as follows:**

**1. - Angels were created before the creation of
mankind:**

**And when thy Lord said unto the angels,
"Lo! I am about to place a viceroy on earth. They
said, "Wilt Thou place therein one who will do
harm therein and will shed blood, while we hymn
thy praise and sanctify thee?" He said, "Surely I
know that which ye know not." (20:30)**

**2 - Angels were created in order to obey God
totally:**

**O ye who believe! ward off from yourselves and
your families a fire whereof the fuel is men and
stones, over - which are set angels strong, severe,
who resist not God in that which He commandeth
them, but do that which they are commanded.**

(66:6)

They celebrate His praises and bow down before Him.

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(7:206).

Those who bear the throne, and all who are round it, hymn the praises of their Lord and believe in Him. (40:7)

3 - When God has created Adam, He taught him the nature of all things and made him teach the angels about these facts since they expressed ignorance about them. Then when Adam's superiority over the angels was established. God ordered them to bow to Adam. They did this not in worship, but in reverence,

4 - Angels sometimes take the physical form of human beings. . The Holy Quran states in the chapter concerning the story of Mary:

... Then we sent unto her Our spirit and it assumed for her the likeness of a perfect man. (19; 17)

And Ibrahim's guests were angels in the form of human' beings, to whom a sumptuous dinner of fatted calf was laid out:'

And when he saw their hands reached not to it he mistrusted them and conceived a fear of them. They said, "Fear not. Lo! We are sent unto the folk of Lot." (11:70) "

5 - The angels' abode is in heaven, and they come down to earth according to God's orders: We (angels) come not down save by commandment of the Lord. Unto Him belongeth all that is before us and all that is behind us and all that is between those two, and thy Lord was never forgetful. (19:64)

6 - And the angels are grouped in various categories and denominations, according to their characteristics and degree of servitude to God. God describes them as follows:

Praise be to God, The Creator of the heavens and the

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The Angels

earth. Who appointeth the angels messengers having wings - two, three and four. He multiplieth in creation what He will. (35:1).

There is not one of us (angels) but hath his known position. (37:164')

Among the angels is Jibril (Gabriel), who conveys the revelation:

Say (O Mohammed, to mankind): Who is an enemy to Jibril'. For he it is who hath revealed (this Scripture) to thy heart by God's leave, confirming that which was (revealed) before it, and a guidance and glad tidings to believers. (2:9)

And among the angels are those responsible for death:

Say (one day), the angel of death who has been given charge of you will gather you, and then unto your Sustainer you will be brought back. (32:1 1)

Among the angels are also those who blow the trumpet and the Angel Mikayil (Michael) and the bearers of the throne:

Those who bear the Throne, and all who are round about it, hymn the praises of hteir Lord. (40:7)

And the angels will be on the sides thereof, and eight will uphold the throne of thy Lord that day, above them. (69:17)

And there are angels who are responsible for the comfort of those in paradise:

Gardens of Eden which they enter, along with all who do right of their fathers and their helpmates and their seed. The angels enter unto them from every gate. (13:23)

And there are still more angels who are charged with the

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task of inflicting punishment on those who are in hell:

O ye who believe! Ward off from yourselves and your families a fire whereof the fuel is men and stones, over which are set angels strong, severe,

who resist not God in that which He commandeth them, but do that which they are commanded.

(66:6)

And some angels are assigned the work of recording mankind's deeds:

He uttereth no word but there is with him an observer ready. (50:18)

Generous and recording. (82:1 1)

And there are angels who usher men into the Divine presence on the Day of Judgement, and bear witness against them:

And every soul cometh, along with it a driver and a witness. (50:21)

7 - The Holy Quran also states that angels infuse believers with courage and fortitude at times of war: When thy Lord inspired the angels, (saying) 'I am with you. So make those who believe stand firm.'" (8:12)

The angels pray for soldiers and seek God's forgiveness for them:

He it is Who blesseth you, and His angels (bless you) that He may bring you forth from darkness into light. (33:43)

Our Lord! Thou comprehendest all things in mercy and knowledge, therefore forgive those who repent and follow Thy way. Ward off from them ill-deeds; and he from

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The Angels

**whom Thou wardest off ill-deeds that day, him verily hast
Thou taken into mercy. That is the supreme triumph.**

(40:7-

9)

**And the angels witness the dawn prayers with the
believers:**

**And (the recital of) Quran at dawn. Lo! (the recital
of) the Quran at dawn is ever witnessed. (17:78)**

**When we pass on from this worldly life, the angels
bring tidings to believers and reproach to unbelievers:**

**But behold as for those who say, "Our
Sustainer is God", and then steadfastly pursue the
right way-upon them do angels often descend,
(saying), "Fear not and grieve not, but receive the
glad tidings of that paradise which has been
promised to you!" (41:30)**

**Behold, those whom the angels gather in
death while they are still sinning against
themselves, (the angels) will ask, "What was
wrong with you?". They will answer, "We were
too weak on earth". (The angels) will say, "Was
then God's earth not wide enough for you to
forsake the domain of evil?". For such then, the
goal is hell - and how evil a journey's end! (4: 97)
and**

**And if thou couldst but see (how it will be)
when He causes those who are bent on denying
the truth to die: the angels will strike their
faces and their backs, and (will say), "Taste
suffering through fire in return for what your
own hands have wrought, for never does God
do the least wrong to His creatures (8: 50-51)
The angels lead sinners to the fire and
rebuke them:**

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**And those who were bent on denying the truth will
be urged on in throngs towards hell till, when they
reach it, its gates will be opened, and its keepers
will ask them, "Have there not come to you
apostles from among yourselves, who conveyed to
you your Sustainer's messages and warned you of
the coming of this your Day of Judgement?" They
will answer, "Yea - indeed". But the sentence of
suffering will (already) have fallen upon the
deniers of the truth. (And) they will be told, "Enter
the gates of hell, therein to abide!" (39:71-72)**

**And angels also greet and welcome those who
enter paradise:**

**And those who keep their duty to their Lord are
drives unto the garden in troops till, when they reach
it and the gates thereof are opened, and the warders**

thereof say unto them, "Peace be unto you! Ye are good, so enter ye (the garden of delight), to dwell therein." (39:73)

Angels do not marry or have children, and they are not described as being sexual beings, and males and females.

The above gives a general picture of what is mentioned about angels in the Holy Quran. And, as stated before, because they are mentioned in the Holy Quran, believers are expected to believe in them. To believe in them is among one of the basic tenets of faith.

The messenger believeth in that which hath been revealed unto him from his Lord and (so do) the believers. Each one believeth in God and His angels and His scriptures and His messengers - we make no distinction between any of His messengers. (2:285)

Benefits, gained by belief in Angels

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The Angels

In the knowledge Belief in angels increases our awareness of God's glory and makes us more conscious of His mercy, as angels pray for believers and seek forgiveness on their behalf.

In the knowledge that angels keep a record of all our deeds, we are able to steer clear of what would be

harmful to us, as believers. What's more, we feel encouraged to embark upon noble deeds, such as *Jihad*, knowing that God has ordered the angels to support us. We therefore seek to behave in such a way that will lead us to heaven, where we shall be greeted by them. Likewise, we will abstain from actions which will lead us to hell, where they will rebuke us.

In other words, the overall benefit from having a belief in angels is that it will make us more committed in our obedience to God, and more conscious of abstaining from doing what is against His will. And in so doing, we strengthen angelic qualities within ourselves.

The *Jinn*

God Almighty has also informed us of other beings who cannot be perceived by us and who dwell in the unseen. Our inability to perceive them is similar to our not being able to see ultraviolet or infra-red rays, or hear sound waves or perceive electricity. This special species, mentioned in earlier chapters, are known as *jinn*.

While, unlike belief in angels, belief *in jinn* is not a basic tenet of faith, as *jinn* are mentioned in the Holy Quran they must therefore be taken note of.

The Holy Quran Regarding *Jinn*

1 - The Holy Quran informs us that jinn were created from fire. However, this does not mean that

they are fiery bodies

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burning anything that comes into contact with them.

It is quite possible that God may have changed them into a different form, as He did in the case of human beings. Man was created from clay, but transformed into a different entity -a structure consisting of bones, muscles, blood and a nervous system. This means, therefore, that all creations may change from one state of being to another, in accordance with God's laws for this universe. In the same way, a single cell may be transformed into different living organs of varying qualities, shapes and sizes. Similarly, if God wills. He may create different kinds of metals from a single atom, and a lush green tree from a seed.

2 - *Jinn* were created before man:

Whereas the jinn we had created, (long) before that, out of the fire of scorching winds. (15:27)

3 - Even though jinn can see us, we cannot see them. But there is nothing strange about this. For example, someone looking through binoculars can see someone far from where he is standing, but that person, the object of his view,

cannot see who is looking at him. We have also invented equipment such as television and the telephone which reflect the image of the speaker to us, at the other end. So it is therefore not beyond Divine power to create beings that can see us without us seeing them.

4 - *Jinn* will also be judged on their actions, in the same way as humans, and will also be subject to reward and punishment. This means that hell will consist *of both jinn* and human beings.

And (tell them that) I have not created the jinn and men to any end other than that they may (know and)

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The Angels

worship Me. (51:56)

But (as for those who refuse to avail themselves to Divine guidance), that word of thy Sustainer shall be fulfilled:

"Most certainly will I fill hell with invisible beings as well as with humans, all together." (11:1 19)

5 - The Divine Message was also conveyed to *jinn* as revealed to both our Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and Prophet Moses (peace be upon him).

They said, "O our people! Behold, we have been listening to a revelation bestowed from on high after (that of) Moses, confirming the truth of

whatever there still remains (of the Torah): it guides towards the truth, and onto a straight way."

(46:30)

6 - Like human beings, jinn have different characteristics, and good, obedient and evil and sinful beings dwell among them.

Just as (we do not know how it happens) that some from among us are righteous, while some of us are (far) below that: we have always followed widely divergent paths. (72:1 1)

Yet (it is true) that among us are such as have surrendered themselves to God-just as there are among us such as have abandoned themselves to wrong doing. Now as for those who surrender themselves to Him - it is they that have attained to consciousness of what is right. (72:14)

God made them (*jinn*) submissive to the Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon), (peace be upon him):

They made for him what he willed - synagogues and statues, basins like wells and boilers built into the ground.

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Give thanks, O House of David! Few of my bondsmen are thankful. (34:13)

8 - *Jinn* do not have knowledge of the unseen.

Therefore They continued to work for Sulaiman even after his death,

And when We decreed death for him, nothing showed his death to them save a creeping creature of the earth, which gnawed away his staff. And when he fell, the jinn saw clearly how, if they had known the unseen, they would not have continued in despised toil. (34:14)

9 - God also challenged the jinn, in just the same way as He challenged human beings, to produce a work similar to the Holy Quran:

Say: Verily though mankind and the jinn should assemble to produce the like of this Quran, they could not produce the like thereof though they were helpers one of another, (17:88)

10 - *Jinn* were curious to find out more about the nature of the heavens and tried to pick up information from Angels, However, after the advent of Islam, they were prevented from doing so and whenever they tried to find out more, they were confronted with a blazing fire.

And we used to sit on places (high) therein to listen. But he who listeneth now findeth a flame in wait for him. (79:9)

Devils

Unbelievers among *jinn* are known as devils, and their father is *Iblis*. Some people believe that Iblis is an angel, but in fact he is a *jinn*. The reasons to support that are:

1 - God has said so in the Holy Quran:

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Behold! We said to the angels, bow down to Adam. They bowed down, except *Iblis*. He was one of the Jinn and he broke the command of his Lord. (18:5)

Iblis disobeyed his Lord Whereas angels flinch not from the commands they receive from God. (66:6)

2- The Holy Quran states that *Iblis* was created from fire:

God said, "What prevented thee from bowing down when I commanded thee?" He said, "I am better than he: Thou didst create me from fire and him from clay. (7:12)

Devils - as mentioned in the Holy Quran

1 - The devil is enemy number one to mankind.

It is he j who caused the banishment of the father of all mankind from paradise. His main aim is to prevent people from entering heaven, so he tries to lead us into temptation and the path of hell.

Unfortunately, many of us succumb to his temptation and are led away from the path of God, therefore disregarding the guidance shown by the prophets.

God has reprimanded man for his foolishness in giving in to temptation in such a way, instead of

following His path, I which ensures mercy and forgiveness.

Will ye then take him and his progeny as protectors rather than Me? And they are enemies to you! Evil would be the exchange for the wrong doers! (18:50)

2 - The above verse indicates that the devil has offspring, and these offspring are from *Iblis*.

3 - While God has made the devil a predominant source of evil influence on mankind. He has not granted him the power

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to cause good or harm, nor any power that cannot be suppressed. The only power He has granted him is cunning.

... feeble indeed is the cunning of satan.

(4:6)

... but he (the devil) cannot harm them in the least, except as God permits. (8:10)

... but he (the devil) has not authority over them. (34:21)

4 - The devil's sole occupation is to cast doubt on man's mind that the path of God is the right one to follow, and therefore the devil will try to mislead him and ultimately cause him the greatest harm.

The evil one threatens you with poverty and bids you to conduct unseemly (acts). (2:268)

Satan makes them promises, and creates in them false desire. But Satan's promises are nothing but deception. (4:120)

The devil lures them to intoxication and gambling - an abomination of Satan's handwork... (5:93)

The devil's main task is to spread evil, immorality and dissent among all human beings. The basic rule he has laid down is to tempt man towards exhibitionism - to give up modesty and resort to crude behaviour.

O children of Adam! Let not Satan seduce you as he caused your (first) parents to go forth from the garden and tore off from them their robe (of innocence) that be might manifest their shame to them. Lo! He seeth you, he and his tribe, from whence ye see them not. Lo! we have made the devils protecting friends for those who believe not. (7:27)

The devil also strives to make what is bad appear good 10

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the eyes of his followers.

... and the devil made all that they used to do seem

fair unto them. (6:43)

He also instigates his followers to spread doubts among believers and to turn their attention away from following the way of truth by provoking arguments and disputes. God has warned us against this.

... and eat not of that whcreon God's *name* hath not been mentioned, for lo! it is abomination. Lo! the devils do inspire their minions to dispute with you. But if you obey them, ye will be in truth idolaters. (6:121)

The devil also persistently tries to persuade the believer to forget God and to embark on acts which lead him away from truth.

The devil hath engrossed them and so hath caused them to forget remembrance of God. They are the devil's party. Lo! is it not devils party who will be the losers. (58:19)

Lo! Those who ward off (evil), when a glamour from the devil troubleth them, they do but remember (God's guidance) and behold them seers! (7:201)

5 - Even though the devil, with his persistent tricks and intrigues is our greatest enemy, ultimately, he can neither help nor harm us. He may try his best to influence us regarding everything we do, but in fact this influence is only temptation. In the end, the choice is ours: we

either give in to his temptations or disregard them and rise to sublime heights, which in turn, affect the way we conduct ourselves in our lives. This is what is meant when Satan says:

"Lo! God has promised you a promise of truth; and

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I promised you, then failed you. And I had no power over you save that I called unto you and ye obeyed me. So blame

me not, but blame yourselves. I cannot help you, nor can ye

help me. Lo! I disbelieved in that which ye ascribed to me. Lo! for wrong-doers is a painful doom." (14:22)

When *Iblis* begged God to grant him respite until the Day of Resurrection and God agreed. Iblis said:

... "My Lord! Because Thou has sent me astray, I verily shall adorn the path of error for them on earth, and shall mislead them every one." (15:39)

And God the Almighty said:

... This is a right course incumbent upon Me. Lo! as for My servants, thou hast no power over any of them save such of the forward as follow thee." (15:41-42)

And when thou recitest the Quran, seek refuge in God from Satan the outcast. Lo! he hath

no power over those who believe and put trust in their Lord. His power is only over those who make a friend of him, and those who ascribe partners unto him. (16:98-100)

6 - The devil abandons his followers in their hours of need and betrays them: Remember Satan made their (sinful) acts seem alluring to them and said(to the polytheists of Mecca on the day of the battle of Badr), "No one among men can overcome you this day, while I am near to you." But when the two forces came in sight of each other, he turned on his heels and said, "Lo! I am clear of you. I see what ye see not. I fear God!" (8:48)

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The Angels

(Their allies deceived them), like the evil one (Satan) when he says to man, "Deny God". But when (man) denies God, (the evil one) says! am free of thee. I do fear God..." (59:16)**

Human Devils

Human beings can acquire devilish characteristics when they spend their time talking against God, behaving immorally and inducing others to wear indecent clothing. Such people provoke arguments which are not founded on truth and create disharmony

within the Muslim community and we should be wary of them. The Holy Quran says:

Say: I seek refuge with the Lord and Cherisher of mankind, the King (or Ruler) of mankind, the God (or Judge) of mankind, from the mischief of the whisperer (of evil) who withdraws (after his whisper the same) who whispers into the hearts of mankind, among ^'w/t and among men. (114:1-6)

Therefore anyone who places importance on the spread of immorality in any form whatsoever is a 'human devil'; that also includes anyone who supports racialism or diverts people from their religious path.

And say, "O my Lord! I seek refuge with Thee from the suggestion of the evil ones. and I seek refuge with Thee O my Lord! Lest they should come near me." (23:97-98).

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CHAPTER XII

FAITH IN THE PROPHETS

The angels, jinn and prophets are all created by God and act as His servants; this is a basic tenet laid down by the Holy Quran, It is God who created them - and it is He Who regulates their course in life on earth. Like everyone else, they do not have the ability to cause either good or harm, unless God so wishes.

All prophets are human beings, and

therefore, like human beings, they are born, die, fall ill and enjoy good health; eat and drink and do not differ from them in their material way of being.

Prophets are void of divinity, as divinity is exclusive to God, but they do receive revelations, a fact which caused wonder and astonishment among earlier generations.

Regarding this attitude. God says in the Holy Quran:

Is it a matter of wonderment to me that we have sent our inspiration to a man from among themselves-that he should warn mankind (of their danger) and give the good

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news to the believers. (10:2).

And naught prevented mankind from believing when the guidance came unto them save that they said, "Hath God sent a mortal as (His) messenger?" (17:94).

God the Almighty replied by saying that a prophet is one among the community to which he is sent:

Say: If there were upon the earth angels walking secure. We would have sent down for them from heaven an angel as messenger. (17:95).

Those who were astonished argued saying, 'Ye are but mortals like us, who would fain turn us away from what our fathers used to worship. Then bring some clear warrant.'" (14:10).

The prophets answered:

"We are but mortals like you, but God giveth grace unto whom He will of His slaves. It is not ours to bring you a warrant unless by the permission of God.'" (14:11).

And they argued saying, "What aileth this messenger (of God) that he eateth food and walketh in the markets?" (25:7).

And the Divine answer to those who argued was:

They say, "Why is not an angel sent down to him?" If we did send down an angel, the matter would be settled at once, and no respite would be granted them. If we had made it an angel, we should have sent him as a man, and we should certainly have caused them confusion in a matter which they have already covered with confusion. (6:8 - 9).

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Faith in the Prophets

The Prophet - a True Profile

The Prophet is only superior to other human beings, inasmuch as he has been bestowed with

**divine revelation. God says to Muhammad:
Say thou, "I am but a man like you; it is revealed
to me." (41:6).**

**The word 'but' occurs in this verse for the
purpose of restriction and qualification, and it also
excludes any possibility of the Prophet having any
qualities which are incompatible with human
beings. This is further emphasised in this verse, by
the words 'like you'.**

**As we said before, physically a prophet is just
like us. But he differs from us in the way he
behaves, his outstanding qualities and his
greatness. Even if Muhammad had not been the
last of the Prophets, he would have certainly been
the greatest of the great and a hero of heroes.**

**But if a prophet is like us, can he make the
same mistakes? The answer to that question is
as follows:**

**1 - No prophet will miscommunicate the
Divine message and teaching the path of God. A
prophet cannot go wrong on such occasions, as
when he gives such teaching he is acting as a
'channel' for the Divine Source, and therefore
does not "say of his own desire." (53:3).**

**O mankind! The Apostle hath come to you in truth
from God. (4:170).**

After receiving prophethood, it is impossible

for a prophet to be anything but completely just and fair in his behaviour or to conduct himself in any way that contradicts his image as a perfect human being. This is because God has made him a

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shining example for us to use as a model for our own behaviour.

Ye have indeed in the apostle of God a beautiful pattern (of conduct). (33:21).

All prophets are deemed to be like this.

There was indeed in them an excellent example for you to follow. (60:6).

Such a quality requires a prophet to be above any vices and shortcomings.

2 - the prophet may sometimes make a mistake with regards to religious teaching, but this is only when he exercises his own independent thinking concerning a matter about which he has not received Divine guidance. Any prophet may commit such an error. However, God does not endorse such mistakes, in fact. He corrects them and shows them the right path, as happened in the incident with the blind person, as narrated in the Holy Quran in Surah 80, entitled 'He frowned', and also the incident involving the captives, after

the battle of Badr. On both these occasions the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), acted on his own opinion, which was later disapproved of through revelation.

I pondered over his attitude towards the blind man, and said to myself, "If God had not revealed this Surah, He frowned', and had the Prophet explained the reasons for his attitude to the politicians and wise and learned men of that time, would anyone of them have found fault with him or would they have unanimously approved of his action?"

During this incident the Prophet, (peace be upon him), was engrossed in a discussion with a group of eminent men whom

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he was eager to win over to his side. At that time, one of his followers came up to him wanting clarification on a matter which was in no way urgent and could have waited until the Prophet had finished the task at hand. Would anyone have behaved differently in such a case? And could anyone deny that his action was correct?

While he acted correctly according to human reasoning, this was overruled by Divine revelation for factors beyond the scope of the human minds.

And of course. Divine reasoning is beyond any shortcoming whereas human thinking can be partial and misconstrued.

The same may be said regarding the stand taken by the Prophet about the captives of the battle of Badr: according to Divine revelation it was an incorrect stand, even though it would have been Judged correct by the most serious-minded and wise men. However, it is important not to criticise these incidents as being mistakes made by a great man. What we can learn from them is that divine revelation is above the wisdom of every mortal.

3 - A prophet may make mistakes regarding administrative or military matters, because a prophet is a human being, and he thinks and acts like one. When he was deliberating on such matters, the Prophet Muhammad's companions would ask him whether his decision was based on Divine revelation or his own thinking. If he said that it was not a Divine directive but rather his own opinion, they would also express their personal views, which he would either accept or reject.

To illustrate this, we can look at the incident of the battle of Badr. The companions asked, "O Prophet of God, is this a location assigned to you

by the Almighty, which means we can neither advance nor retreat from it, or did you decide to come

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here of your own will and discretion, thinking it was a tactical move?" When he answered that he had acted upon his own decision, they suggested a different move which he accepted and acted upon. Similar changes in his decision occurred during the digging of the trench and the truce with the tribe of Ghatafan, during that battle.

4 - The Prophet expressed his own views, with regard to everyday matters, such as industry, agriculture and medicine. Of course, he may have been wrong, as such knowledge belongs to specialists in those areas. For example, he was wrong in his opinion of how to pollinate date palms.

But this was not a shortcoming, as no one however great in his knowledge and learning, can be expected to know about everything. In this case the pollinating of date palms is a purely agricultural matter and the Prophet's opinion was off the cuff. He neither pushed them to accept his view, nor did he accredit it to Divine revelation. When he realised his mistake he told them, "You

know better regarding your worldly affairs."

The Prophet Has No Knowledge of the Unseen

The Holy Quran states that the Prophet has no knowledge of the metaphysical world, and that God has commanded him to inform mankind of that fact:

Say: I tell you not that with me are the treasures of God nor do I know what is hidden, nor do I tell you I am an angel. I but follow what is revealed to me. (6:50).

Say: I have no power over any good or harm to myself, except as God willeth. If I had knowledge of the unseen,! should have multiplied all goods, and no evil should have touched me: I am but a warner and a bringer of glad tidings

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to those who have faith. (7: 188).

The Prophet (peace be upon him), conveyed to mankind the above Divine Message; the same Message is contained in the Holy Quran and recited by all Muslims.

Many Prophets, One Message

God Almighty states in the Holy Quran that a prophet was sent to every nation:

... there never was a people without a warner

having lived among them (in the past) (35:24).

**However, the Holy Quran does not mention
all the prophets:**

**Of some apostles we have already told thee the
story; of others we have not. (4:164).**

**All the prophets were sent to convey faith in
the oneness of God and the importance of
following His path. The main principles of Islam
are, therefore, the same as those of earlier
religions, taught by earlier prophets.**

**The same religion has He established for you as that
which he enjoined on Noah- that which We have sent
by inspiration to thee - and which we enjoined on
Abraham, Moses and Jesus: namely, that ye should
remain steadfast in religion and make no division
therein. (42:13).**

**Each prophet was sent to his people to teach
and explain the Divine Message in their language.
And never have we sent forth any apostle
otherwise than (with a message) in his own
people's tongue, so that he might make (the
truth) clear unto them. (14:4).**

**The Divine Message revealed to the Prophet
Muhammad**

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(peace be upon him) was the last message and it

is addressed to all mankind, and he was the last prophet. All Divine Revelations ceased with his departure from this world and thus religion was complete.

Today have I perfected your religious law for you and have bestowed upon you the full measure of My blessing, and willed that selfsurrender unto Me shall be your religion.

(5:3).

The Answer to an Important Question

Many people may wonder why the message brought by the Prophet Muhammad was addressed to all mankind whereas other messages had been given only to their respective peoples. How can this message remain unchanged and unamended whilst other messages have been changed?

The answer to this question is, though God Almighty knows better, that the message of Islam is viable and suitable for every age and place.

Islamic tenets of faith and principles of worship have been given in explicit and detailed texts. It admits no change or amendment because these tenets and principles do not need to be changed with the times, and they do not vary according to different traditions or conventions.

It is important to note that concerning

constitutional issues, financial matters and administrative dealings which are affected by changing times and tradition. The Divine directives were conveyed in the form of broad principles. Like the foundations of a building, the structure built upon it is left to the discretion of every age and every society, and provided they are adhered to, are perfectly viable. Here are some brief examples.

Islam teaches that a ruler should be selected by consensus

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of his nation, and that he should have the necessary qualities for performing the duties of the state. He should abide by the Islamic Constitution, which is the Holy Quran, and seek the opinion of those in power.

In fact, every society throughout the ages has been given the freedom to decide how they will select their leader, the procedure they will use to appoint positions of authority, etc.

In Islam, rule by justice is compulsory. But we are given freedom to determine the course of justice, ways of appointing judges and legal procedures. With regards to legal contracts, we have been given general rules that ensure the

rights and privileges of the two parties involved. Rules concerning accurate wording and the expression of intent of the two sides have also been laid down. Any type of contract which will harm the good of the public or put one of the parties down, is banned. We are free to work out the details of the clauses of a contract- As regards individual enterprises and financial transactions, these are sanctioned by Islam, and only in instances where there are particular directives of something originally forbidden, are these banned.

Islam has opened the doors of reform for us. Any matter which is in the public interest of a Muslim society, and which is neither obligatory nor forbidden, as per the *Sharia*, may be created as a religious duty by the order of a Muslim ruler. Financial laws, the penal code, administrative regulations (traffic rules, municipal laws, etc.,) all fall under this category.

So Islam is applicable to the needs of every age and society. However, some latter jurists have, due to narrow attitudes, forbidden to the public what is permitted by the *Sharia*, or, conversely, forced them to adopt liberal attitudes

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which are not allowed in Islam,

In the olden days, especially during the time of the earlier prophets, the world was a vast expanse and nations

were far apart with few means for contact and interaction with each other. Their only means of transport were camels

and other animals. However, with the advent of Islam, contact and interaction grew rapidly. Nowadays a speech delivered in New York can be heard simultaneously in Tokyo. The world is growing smaller, and is becoming more like one nation. Therefore the Message of Islam could be spread to all comers of the world, if only Muslims were to take seriously their responsibility regarding what their religion enjoins upon them.

Islam Does not Differentiate Between the Prophets

Some people may criticise prophets belonging to religions other than their own. But Islam enjoins upon every Muslim to respect other prophets, and therefore any criticism or disrespect against other prophets goes against Islamic principles.

The Apostle and the believers with him, believe in what has been bestowed upon him from on high by his Sustainer. They all believe in God and His

angels, and His revelations and His apostles, making no distinction between any of his apostles and they say, "We have heard and we pay heed. Grant us thy forgiveness. O our Sustainer, for to Thee is the return (of all)" (2:285).

So a Muslim loves Moses and Jesus in the same way as he loves Muhammad, and has the same degree of regard and respect for them.

A Jew who embraces Christianity does not lose his affinity for Moses; he merely develops love for one more prophet,

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namely Jesus. Likewise, a Christian embracing Islam draws near to another prophet, the Prophet Muhammad, in addition to Prophets Jesus and Moses.

May peace be upon Muhammad and all the other prophets and messengers!

Messengers of God Mentioned in the Holy Quran

Muslims believe that the Holy Quran is the Word of God; it was revealed to Muhammad through the Angel Jibril (Gabriel), and Muhammad conveyed this Message to mankind in the same way as he received it. Muslims also believe that the words of the Holy Quran that he

recites are the same words in the text that was transmitted by Jibril. Only the unbeliever denies or doubts any part of it.

The Holy Quran mentions twenty-five prophets and their names occur in five verses:

And this was Our argument which We vouchsafed unto Abraham against his people: (for) We do raise by degrees whom We will.

Verily thy Sustainer is Wise, All-knowing.

And We bestowed upon him Isaac and Jacob, and We guided each of them as We had guided Noah aforetime. And out of his offspring (We bestowed prophethood upon) David, and Solomon, and Job, and Joseph, and Moses, and Aaron: for thus We reward the doers of good; and upon Zachariah, and John, and Jesus, and Elijah: every one of them was of the righteous; and (upon) Ishmael, and Eisha, and Jonah, and Lot. And every one of them did We favour above the other people. (6: 83 " 86).

And call to mind through this Divine writ, Idris. Behold, he was a man of truth, a prophet, whom We exalted

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onto a lofty station. (19:56).

And unto (the tribe of) 'Ad (We sent) their brother Hud. (7:65).

And unto (the tribe of) Thamud (We sent)

their brother Salih. (7:73).

And unto (the people of) Madyan (We sent) their brother Shu'ayb. (7:85).

And (remember) Ismail and Idris and Dhul-kifl, all-(men) of constancy and patience. (21:85).

Although the Holy Quran does not refer to Adam specifically as a prophet, we can deduce from the verses where he is mentioned that he was one.

Among the twenty five prophets mentioned in the Holy Quran, some, such as Idris and Dhul-Khifl, have only been referred to very briefly by name. Others are mentioned with a short account of their life histories, such as Ismael, Isaac and Yunus, while great detail has been given about other Prophets such as Abraham, Moses, Joseph and Jesus.

All stories in the Holy Quran about the prophets are true and authentic, and one of the principles of faith for Muslims is to believe in them.

Some of these apostles have we endowed more highly than others: among them were such as were spoken to by God (Himself) and some He has raised yet higher. (2:253).

Miracles

The Quraysh tribe were unable to believe that the Prophet (peace be upon him) had been able to travel from Mecca to Jerusalem in one night. Of course, these days such a journey

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would not strike anyone as being an impossible feat. But in the days of our Prophet it was considered impossible, as the only means of transport available were animals, such as camels and donkeys. Even the most eminent of physicists living a hundred years ago would never have believed anyone who told him that a time would come when people would be able to fly through the air in vehicles made of iron and steel, or moreover go up into space! He would have found it difficult to believe that voices could be recorded and broadcast everywhere and anywhere and that we would therefore be able to listen to people's voices after they had passed away.

Achieving the Impossible

The concept of 'impossibility' is founded on two beliefs. Firstly, impossibility based on something being unfeasible, which is beyond our capabilities, such as the examples given above. The second concept of the term refers to what our minds are unable to take in. For example, we

cannot conceive that any two opposites can meet. Let us take the example of existence and nonexistence: a man cannot be present and absent in a place at the same time. In the same way, no object can take on two entities at the same time, so that a book cannot become a spoon while it is still a book.

That which is impossible in the sense of something being mentally inconceivable remains impossible. However, what is considered to be impossible because it is not feasible, may become possible if man studies the laws of nature God has laid down for the universe and, as a result, succeeds in making it feasible.

In fact as God laid down these laws of nature He can make possible anything which seems impossible. So we should, after ascertaining the facts, accept the fact that this type of

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impossibility can become a possibility.

Supernatural Occurrences

The Holy Quran mentions three types of supernatural occurrences. The first type concerns miracles performed by the prophets when they were challenged to prove their prophethood. Thus, when Prophet Abraham was thrown into the fire.

God made the heat become a peaceful haven. When Prophet Moses threw down his staff, it turned into a snake, and when he struck the sea with his staff, the sea parted and each division looked like a vast mountain. And, with God's permission, Jesus brought the dead back to life. These are all examples of miracles.

The second type of supernatural occurrences happened to saintly people. Food was made available to Mary in her room and the Queen of Sheba's throne was transported from Yemen to Palestine in a split second.

Another example of supernatural occurrences can be described as Divine temptation which tests one's faith. The Holy Quran talks of how the apostate Samaritan produced a calf making a lowing sound, from molten gold.

We should believe in all three types of supernatural happenings and all details regarding them, as they are described in the Holy Quran.

We can, however, keep the supernatural events happening to saintly people, but not recounted in the Quran, open for questioning. They may or may not be true. If they were experienced by truly saintly people, we can believe that these things really happened. A truly saintly person is free of all sin. The Holy Quran says:

Oh verily, they who are close to God - no fear need they have, and neither shall they grieve: they who have

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attained to faith and have always been conscious of Him. (10:62-63).**

You are under no obligation to believe in these occurrences if you are not convinced about the authenticity of the people connected with them.

There are some alleged forms of the supernatural involving sinful acts and strange events which cannot be explained also happen to non-believers. But none of these should be considered supernatural.

Miracles and Magic

When the challenge took place between Moses and Pharaoh's magicians, the latter threw their ropes and sticks and turned them into snakes. But, in fact, these snakes were soon swallowed up by the snake Moses produced! So, was the snake he produced identical to theirs? Did he, like them, perform a conjuring trick? Not at all. The snakes they produced were illusory, and took the spectators in, whereas the one Moses brought about was alive and real. The

magicians were so much in awe of this fact that they made a spontaneous declaration of their faith in God.

The reason for this spontaneous reaction was because the magicians realised that Moses' act was not an illusion or any form of conjuring trick, and were stunned and shaken to the very depth of their hearts. The outcome of this was their total conversion and belief in God. They declared their faith in a way which was most defiant and humiliating to Pharaoh. As they admitted their faith, the falsehood of Pharaoh's greatness and the fact that his form of godliness was untrue, became apparent to them. They changed their outlook immediately because this

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world suddenly seemed trivial to them; so they did not feel threatened by Pharaoh's threat to punish them by crucifixion and mutilation.

They developed an inner calm which shielded them from fear and panic. Even though Pharaoh had the power to punish them in this world, how could that compare with the joy and comfort of the world hereafter? Therefore they snubbed Pharaoh, saying:

"Decree, then, whatever thou art going to decree: thou canst decree only (something that pertains to) this worldly life!" (20:/2). How much I, who was born a Muslim, and whose forefathers have been Muslims, wish I had been bestowed with this kind of spontaneous faith, as were Pharaoh's magicians, a faith that was born as a result of their accepting Islam.

Miracles of Muhammad (peace be upon him)
The two miracles granted to our Prophet (peace be upon him), are, firstly, the Holy Quran and, secondly, the unique qualities which made him pre-eminently deserving of prophethood. His life history was a miracle in itself!

He was a human being, like all other human beings and God commanded him to declare this fact and make it clear to everyone, in case people made a god of, or ascribed Divine attributes to him.

Say (O Prophet): "I am but a mortal man like all of you. It has been revealed unto me that our God is the One and Only God". (18:110)

However, it has been proved that no other human being is similar to him in his greatness, even though he had all the

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physical and mental characteristics of a human being. God Almighty has not created any unique human being from among the children of Adam, save Muhammad - peace be upon him, his father Abraham, Moses, Jesus - and on all the other prophets.

It would be both untrue and grossly unfair to Muhammad if we were to compare him with all the thousands of great men throughout history. Every great man has been known only for a certain aspect of greatness: some have been known for their wisdom, but notorious for their lack of sensitivity and difficulty in expressing themselves; others were noted for their eloquence of speech and their power of imagination, but the ideas they expressed were banal. Still others were most able administrators and distinguished leaders, but corrupt in their personal lives.

Our Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is the only great man who can be described as the epitome of greatness. All the others had a blind spot, maybe a guarded secret regarding their moral behaviour - some sort of perversity or weakness.

Only Muhammad has a life history which is

an open book, for everyone to read and scrutinise. He alone permitted his companions to tell the public everything about him. They therefore described every detail of his behaviour both during his hours of tranquillity, as well as times when he was open to human weakness; when he showed signs of anger, desire or was prey to emotional reactions.

We can also read all about his private and domestic life, as told by his wives. With his permission, Aisha narrated every detail regarding his family life. Nothing has been left out as all his actions were carried out according to the Divine path and

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guidance. I would have quoted details about his personal life, were it not for the fact that it might be embarrassing for some readers. Nonetheless, all such aspects can be read about both in the books about his life and in those on Islamic jurisprudence. You can read about strictly personal aspects of his life: his habits with regard to personal hygiene, the way he ate, dressed, slept, etc.

Is there any other great man who has dared to say to the public, "Look - here is my life history, -

everything I have done. You can read it and tell others about it - friends and enemies! And I am open to criticism from anyone!".

Has anyone else's life history been recorded and kept intact for so many centuries?

A man may be great for his intrinsic qualities, noble disposition and personal charm, and he can also be revered for his intellectual brilliance, which he leaves behind as a heritage for his own country and the world. Every great man has only one such dimension of greatness in him. But Muhammad's greatness represents every aspect. We should also consider the fact that most great men are great only among their own people. They may do good for them, while harming others who do not belong to this category. The life histories of statesmen, warriors and conquerors all show this.

Or a man may be well known and respected all over the world, but his fame may be due to a limited area: discovery of one of the many laws of nature which God laid down for our universe, or a certain medicine for a particular disease. He may have come up with a new theory of philosophy, or written a masterpiece or the life story of a literary genius.

But Muhammad's greatness was

comprehensive in both

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range and scope, and he practised what he preached. He was unlike the many missionary zealots of the past and the present, who fail to practise what they preach at the top of their voices! Those whose true colours were exposed during moments of weakness: desire, fear, anger, need and hunger. At moments like this they might completely forget what they teach. Maybe I can hold myself up as an example.

Sometimes I rise to sublime heights when I am writing an article, or delivering a lecture encouraging people to abide by truth, goodness, and righteousness. But as soon as I reach these heights, my ego interferes! I start to long for some sort of glory. In fact, man's inner self does try to lead him away from God. So, within a few minutes I come down to earth again, to an ordinary existence. Because people notice this very same attitude among preachers and religious men, they do not take much notice of what they say.

As for our Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), he practised whatever he taught. He exhorted people to do good, and shun temptation;

what's more, he translated his words into actions, using the Holy Quran as his guiding force. He was tireless in his effort to reform people by his words and deeds. He was not invited to give lectures and seminars at universities and such places. He carried out his mission wherever he was: at home, in the mosque or in a public place. He really demonstrated everything that the Holy Quran pleads for and exhorts people to do, in his everyday life.

He used to offer night prayers for such a long time that his feet became swollen. He always sought God's forgiveness. Someone once asked him "Hasn't God forgiven you for all your sins (then why do pray such long hours)?", to which he replied, "Shouldn't I be a thankful servant of God?" Every single action

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was like a prayer, because he always sought to do good and banish evil, and he unceasingly sought to serve the common good.

I would like to quote just one incident to show how he practised what he believed and adhered strongly to the principles he held high, and kept above all other considerations. But before I relate the incident, let me preset the

following prelude.

If a girl from a distinguished family was caught stealing, would she get the same sort of punishment as a girl from a working class background, accused of a similar crime? Probably not! In most cases, many secret efforts would be made to see that the whole matter was hushed up, or the legal punishment was not severe.

A similar incident happened during the Prophet's lifetime. A young woman coming from one of the most distinguished and noblest Muslim families committed a theft. She was found to be guilty and this verdict was announced.

Immediately some people tried to intervene, hoping that the Prophet, well-known for his magnanimity and love of forgiveness, would grant pardon in this case. Not at all! In fact he was angry that he had been approached in this way, and reminded people of how earlier generations had been ruined because crimes committed by people of influence and position went unpunished, while the weak and humble were punished. He then made a remarkable statement which came to be accepted as a firm principle of Islam.

"Indeed - by God, if Fatima, daughter of Muhammad, were to steal, her hand would be amputated." This statement put an end to

interference in legal verdicts.

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The above attitude was natural for the Prophet, because his whole life was a life of *dawah* (spreading the message of Islam). His personal likes and dislikes, and his friendships with people were governed by the Divine Message. And he did not hesitate to break any bonds which conflicted with his mission.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) had elevated himself above all desire for the good things of life which human beings usually crave for. However, he did not live like a hermit and deprive himself of food or become a mystic wearing strange clothes. He ate whatever good food was served to him, provided it came within the confines of Divine Law. He was never seen to look down on any kind of food.

He had tremendous willpower which enabled him to be patient at all times, and stay without food for days on end. If hunger pangs overwhelmed him, he would tie a stone over his stomach to suppress his hunger. As regards his clothes, he did not stick to one particular way of dressing himself. He sometimes wore both a cap and a turban at the same time, or at times one or

the other. He usually wore an under-garment, with a robe and an outer garment over it. The jubba (long outer garment) he sometimes wore sometimes had narrow sleeves, not the wide sleeves we see today. His turban consisted of a length of cloth tied round his head, which he would drape over his shoulder when it was not being worn. This type of turban can be used for other purposes during times of peace, or for tying up prisoners in times of war. At times he made a tuft for it. It is necessary to wear turbans in the Arabic peninsula due to climatic reasons and to protect oneself from the intense heat. This has given rise to the saying, "Turbans are the Arabs' crowns." Regarding colour, the Prophet did not stick to any particular one, but wore a black turban on the day

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of his victorious re-entry into Mecca.

Only clothes which show parts of the body which should be covered are forbidden in Islam, or styles which are not in harmony with decency and modesty. Muslim women should only expose their faces and the palms of their hands, and Muslim men should not wear anything made of silk. No Muslim - male or female - should wear

any type of clothing associated with other religions, such as a monk's robe or the clothing of a priest. Clothes should not reflect extravagance or be ostentatious. Apart from these rulings, Islam permits any type of clothing.

While the Prophet (peace be upon him) did not forbid people to enjoy the beautiful and good things of life that God has bestowed on mankind, he did not indulge in them himself. He had risen above the desire to have lust or wealth.

It is a well-known fact that the tribe of Quraysh offered him wealth, power and the position of leader, and tried to tempt him with many other offers in order to persuade him to give up his mission. But he firmly refused all these offers, and felt pity and concern for the people who had made them.

The Prophet was also above the temptations of sexual desire. However, the, subject of women is one which is exaggerated by orientalist who have researched his life and sought to tarnish his image and mislead the public. They use the fact that he married nine wives as a case for him being "a man of lust". But they have judged him in the same way as they judge other great men - eminent writers or brave warriors. For example. Napoleon was a notorious womaniser and made

the whole nation of Poland act as pimps in order for him to gain the hand of Mary Valvdka, with whom he was madly in love. He forced her father to offer her to him as a price to be

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paid for the independence of Poland. The life histories of many great men, such as Alexander Dumas, Byron, Goethe and Bodlieare - and many others, abound with scandals of sexual pursuit. And these orientalist have judged our Prophet by the same standards, drawing the conclusion that he, like the others, was sensuous and a man of lust. But these men did not study Muhammad's life in great depth, nor did they take certain psychological factors into consideration.

Furthermore, their judgements were partial and showed no respect for moral behaviour.

The sexual urge manifests itself in people from the age of puberty until the age of twentyfive.

A person is considered to be most vulnerable at this age, and sex can become an obsession which leads to all sorts of pitfalls and deviation.

This is why free mixing of girls and boys at this age, even for academic purposes, is discouraged.

Now let us consider the Prophet's life at this stage of his life. Did he get misled and enjoy the

pleasures his contemporaries indulged in? After all, he was a free man living in a free country, and in a society which, at that time, was not governed by any religion or law. He was therefore absolutely free to do as he wished.

As we said before, our Prophet's life history is an open book, which anyone can read. Can anyone prove, therefore, that he was, in the full flush of youth, a man who indulged in sensual and immoral pleasures? It is narrated that he was almost led into temptation by his contemporaries, but luckily God saved him. He made him fall asleep, and when he woke up he had forgotten what he had wanted to do. Had he indulged in any such acts of pleasure, his enemies, the polytheists, would not have hesitated to publicise the fact and

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blackmail him.

When our Prophet got married at the age of twenty-five, did he marry a beautiful virgin? Not at all. He married a widow who was his mother's age. Most of his other wives were also widows, and he only married them for tactical reasons. God had granted him permission to marry more than four wives - and this right was not granted to other Muslims. However, God did not give

him the right to divorce them, a right which is given to Muslims.

Of course, the sexual drive is not a human flaw. How could a characteristic of man become a fault of mankind? But it can be harmful when a man becomes sexually obsessive, making it his sole occupation, and seeking to satisfy himself in ways which are not permitted.

The story of Zaynab is a favourite among the critics of Islam. They try to find fault with it, through distortion and misinterpretation, and their views do not, therefore, deserve any attention.

Zaynab was a good-looking girl and closely related to the Prophet. If he had so wished, he could have married her - an act which would have been the greatest honour her family could have wished for. But the Divine Will had ordained that her marriage would be the cause of two important social reforms which were to come about in Islam. Firstly, she was the subject of a test case, and secondly the Prophet was made to set an example to others.

In the first instance. God Almighty sought to put an end to aristocratic pride and class consciousness. So Zaynab, a girl belonging to the noblest Arab stock, was married to Zayd, a

man from a humble background, a fugitive and an adopted son

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of the Prophet. Society at that time considered him totally unworthy of her. but she married him all the same, against the wish of her family.

Subsequently it was difficult for her to adjust to her new life, and she and her husband were constantly bickering. Both partners were ill at ease with each other and wanted to separate. But our Prophet continued to advise Zayd: "Retain your wife and fear God." But the couple had reached the end of their tether and divorce became inevitable.

What happened next involved the Prophet. He was put to the most difficult test. He had to marry Zaynab in order to put an end to the practice of adoption and show the world that it is lawful for a person to marry the wife of his adopted son. This was extremely hard for the Prophet who did not want to bear the stigma of society as one who had married his son's wife. However, he carried out this duty with patience and in obedience to the Divine Will.

However, the above incident should be seen in perspective, and not in the way in which it is

presented by critics of Islam. The conclusions they draw are nonsense and do not deserve any attention.

Physical strength builds up our physical resistance, whereas moral strength - the courage of conviction of the heart - brings us victory over our enemies. Yet the most powerful strength of all, more powerful than the might of our enemies or of any material force, is the strength of the willpower to overcome the self and its cravings - impulses, desires and inclinations.

Our Prophet has, on different occasions, exhorted us to cultivate such a strength: "Strong is not the one who is good at wrestling. Indeed strong is the one who controls himself at the time of anger." And we all know that controlling our anger is

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the most difficult of all tasks! The amount of energy needed to keep our temper is far greater than that required to knock down our opponent in the boxing ring. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the ratio is 1:100. You can try this theory out in everyday life by asking someone who is at the peak of his fury to abide by the principles of good behaviour. You may

not even find one in a thousand men who would respond to your suggestion.

Say you are a religious person engaged in the task of spreading our religion and someone murders a very dear relative of yours and then comes to you to confess his crime and respond to your call to religion. How would you react?

Our Prophet pardoned the man who had brutally murdered his uncle when that man accepted Islam. But even then our Prophet found it hard to suppress his human instinct in such a way so as not to violate the principles of Islam. He therefore said to the man, "Don't let me see you!" So this person never appeared before the Prophet.

The story of Hind is also worth mentioning in this context. Hind was the wife of Abu Sufyan, the arch enemy of the Prophet and his mission. She committed a horrible crime which no human being or wild beast would commit. She cut open the Prophet's uncle's chest, took out his liver and chewed it But the Prophet forgave her, in spite of all her sinful acts, and accepted her into the fold of Islam.

The inhabitants of the city of Taif carried out many wicked deeds against the Prophet, yet when they embraced Islam he pardoned them.

Then we have the most magnanimous act of all-and a most important event in the history of Islam. That was the

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general pardon the Prophet granted the people of Mecca, they who had caused him the greatest possible distress and suffering, both personally and to his mission in general. They spared no effort whatsoever in their attempts to pull him down. They boycotted him, abused him, imprisoned him. threw camel's filth at him while he was praying and placed thorns on the streets through which he passed. And all these events did not take place over a few days - but over a period of thirteen years.

They also fought pitched battles against him and massacred his relatives and companions. Then came the hour of retaliation - although this word does not truly reflect this situation. It was time to impose lawful punishment in answer to that long chain of aggressive and humiliating actions

It was at this point that the Prophet asked the people of Mecca, "What do you think I'm going to do with you all?"

The record of what they had done was always

at the back of their minds which meant they were aware of the punishment they deserved, but they did not forget what a noble character Muhammad was. So they answered, "You are a noble brother and the son of a noble brother." Then they stood in silence, waiting for his verdict. If it had been a death sentence to them all, no one would have objected in the least - and no historian in later years, whether a friend or a critic of Islam, would have been able to find fault with his decision. But Muhammad gave a different verdict; it was one that took them by surprise, and continues to surprise every generation. "Freedom is granted to you all!" he declared.

It is a pity that I have only been able to give such a brief account of this incident. I would have preferred to devote a whole chapter to it in order to present the facts and the

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Prophet's magnanimity in its true perspective. Indeed his attitude would have needed the energy of ten thousand wrestlers!

I wonder why the later day biographers of our Prophet were so concerned with the miracles he performed. In fact, they sometimes gave exaggerated versions and filled in details on their

own. This was sheer fabrication - why did they need to do this? Wasn't every stand our Prophet took and every aspect of his personality a miracle in itself?

Which brings us to the definition of the word miracle. Does it mean achieving something that others have been unable to achieve?

The Prophet's honesty and trustworthiness were miracles in themselves. Alas, it is impossible to give many examples because of the limitations of space, but I would like to mention Just one incident from his life. I have read about it hundreds of times and have always regarded it as rather an ordinary story, until suddenly one day, I realised it was a miracle.

When the Prophet migrated to Medina he left one of his companions, Ali, behind to take care of the money which the Quraysh tribe had entrusted him with. These were the cash assets of the tribe, and Muhammad was the only person they trusted enough to leave them with, even though he and they were not on good terms. He returned them to the Quraysh tribe and not to the Muslims, because all Muslims had migrated, and the Prophet (peace be upon him) was the last to leave Mecca. He stayed there till the last moment, like the captain of an abandoned ship; he did not

leave until all the passengers had disembarked and got into life boats. This is another great quality of our Prophet (peace be upon him) which I have only mentioned briefly.

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Can you imagine two different parties, who have -been engaged in fierce battles, both verbal and on the battlefield for the sake of faith and the Divine Message, entrusting the opposing party with their assets and valuables? Have you ever heard such a story? How could they trust their opponent unless his personal character, integrity and honesty were, beyond any doubt, a miracle?

To doubt him in any way was impossible. This was what the personality of Muhammad was like. And here is another story which shows yet another aspect of his character.

On the day of the battle of Badr, our Prophet was inspecting the infantry. He was carrying a shaft of wood in his hand, and thrust it gently into the abdomen of a soldier named Sawad ibn Ghizya, who was standing apart from the troop formation.

The Prophet wanted to alert him and make him take his place, but as the prod of the shaft of wood had hurt him, he said to the Prophet, "Oh Prophet of God, you have hurt me. Indeed, God has sent you in order to spread the message of truth and justice!"

How do you think the Prophet reacted to such an affront from an ordinary soldier? Did he take any disciplinary action, - did he ignore him or forgive him? Or did he apologise to the soldier in the usual way by saying, "I'm sorry."

He did none of these things. The Prophet did what no one else would do, and something that may not even occur to anyone to do. He uncovered his own abdomen and said, "Thrust the shaft and inflict pain on me as I inflicted it on you!"

This was what he was like. He caused retaliation to himself, in spite of his exalted position among all mankind.

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Muhammad's life history consists of a series of actions and achievements unparalleled in the history of mankind. No other eminent person has left such a record of greatness and glory in every

aspect of his life, behind him. This greatness included personal courage and valour, magnanimity, patience at times of defeat and self restraint at times of anger.

He was a firm and fearless warrior in the battlefield, to such an extent that his companions always rushed to him at critical moments to seek comfort and solace. Even the bravest of men were no challenge for him. He was also a man of extreme compassion. He gave a helping hand to the poor and the needy, and stood by the widows and the aged.

The Prophet always upheld truth, faithfully conveying every verse of the Divine Revelation, including the verses that mentioned his mistakes and reprimanded him. He honoured the treaties he made. and kept his word, despite the difficulties and hardships he had to face on that count. He honoured his commitments, whether they concerned personal dealings or matters of the state.

Our Prophet was meticulous in his personal conduct and behaviour. It was he who laid down rules for table manners and personal hygiene. He educated his companions with regard to these matters, setting himself up as an example for them to follow. His standard of living was in no

way different from theirs. He was never aloof from them, always consulting them and listening to their views. He was *self effacing* and whenever he met his companions he took his seat wherever there was an empty place, even if it meant sitting in a corner, away from everyone else. In fact, visitors had sometimes to strain their eyes in order to spot him. It is said that at one such gathering, a visitor found that everyone who was seated looked

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identical, and therefore asked, "Who among you is Muhammad?" Our Prophet never distinguished himself from others. He was one of them: he dressed like them and resembled them in every way.

His attitude to women was very courteous, and his conduct with the members of his family and at home was remarkable for the unrestrained love and affection he showed. He was close to everyone, because he never let people feel that he was superior to them, like a king.

He never allowed his companions to stand up in reverence to him when he called on them. He used to attend personally to the requirements of his household and even mended his shoes himself.

Our Prophet preferred to lead a frugal life, though he could, if he had wanted, have lived in grand style in a fabulous palace with all the ensuing display of ostentatious living. But he shunned all forms of show because his thoughts were always engaged in the afterlife.

The house where he lived with his wives was only twenty five metres long. Aisha's house consisted of one room made of clay and mud, and it was so narrow that there was not enough room

for her to stretch out while the Prophet prayed, so that whenever he prostrated he had to push her feet to one side.

As for his eating habits, Aisha tells us that he had a very light appetite and that, "a month or two may pass without a fire being lit in the kitchen in order to make bread." When she was asked, "Then what did you all eat?" she replied, "Dates and water." This was the staple diet of the Prophet and his family.

Regarding his eloquence and clarity of speech, he was always known for expressing himself clearly and simply.

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All the qualities we have discussed prove that our Prophet was an extraordinary man and that God Almighty chose him for the tremendous task, only after preparing him fully for that responsibility. Our Prophet was one of many human beings, but no one had his qualities. Indeed God knows best upon whom to bestow His Message.

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CHAPTER XIII

FAITH IN THE BOOKS

The Holy Quran

The Holy Quran is the Divine Book - the miracle revealed to Muhammad.

Anyone who alleges that the Holy Quran was compiled by Muhammad, refuses to acknowledge him as a prophet, but is virtually describing him as a 'God'.

We Muslims say, "There is no God except God and Muhammad is His Servant and His Messenger."

The Holy Quran is a book which cannot be compiled by any human being, nor can it be revealed by anyone but God. Therefore, anyone who says that Muhammad produced the Holy Quran is attributing Divinity to him. Muhammad was illiterate. He never knew how to read or write and never went to school - in fact there was no school in his town at that time. Furthermore, the country he was born in had not known much of civilisation or progress. How, then, could such a person produce a work like the Holy Quran? He came

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from a village surrounded by dark mountains and the wilderness of the desert - a remote place, unheard of at that time. No one in that village had any knowledge of the philosophy of Greece and Rome, nor of the

literature of India and Iran. It was a village, devoid of any academic tradition and activity. There was no one even with a minimum level of education and knowledge.

And our Prophet did not travel from his village, except to go to Busra in Syria, another village, slightly bigger than his own, where he only stayed for a few days. So, how could someone, with such a background produce a work like the Holy Quran?

Biographies have been written about men of genius, and the history of nations in different periods has also been written. But no other book has the same remarkable background as the Holy Quran.

Mozart composed a piece of music when he was less than ten years old, and the well-known Arab poet, Bashsharibn Burd wrote a poem at a very early age.

Likewise, Shakespeare has left us a rich collection of masterpieces. In fact he was not counted as an eminent literary figure during his lifetime. Great achievements have been -produced. An unknown youth may write an excellent story or evolve a scientific theory because he is a genius. But ingenuity is not something only possessed by educated people or university graduates. It may appear in the most unexpected quarters. Those who become well-known in the scientific field, or in literature or the arts may have been a century ahead of their times, excelling their contemporaries by fifty or

even one hundred per cent. However, their excellence will be bound by certain limits and constraints. But no one, in the entire history of mankind, has lived in circumstances

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similar to those in which Muhammad (peace be upon him) lived, and at the same time has managed to convey a masterpiece to the world similar to me Holy Quran.

The Holy Quran excels in both its literary values and its unique treatment of law. It contains an entire legal system which is perfect in every detail. As for the theology therein, and the knowledge of the unseen, it gives information which is not known to anyone - information which the human intellect is unable to perceive. It reveals laws and phenomena pertaining to nature which were unknown to anyone, not only during the time of the Prophet" some of these laws were discovered only 1300 years later, while others still remain undiscovered.

The Holy Quran challenges all mankind. Men and the jinn were asked to produce ten chapters or at least one, like the chapters of the Holy Quran, but they failed to produce even one chapter. This challenge is still open, and the inability still

continues. The illimitability of the book is now established beyond doubt. Its excellence is noticeable in every chapter. It would be incorrect to say it can be observed in some and not in others. We may liken it to a beautiful woman whose beauty is not attributed to or dependent on any single aspect of her appearance - neither her eyes, nor her limbs or specific dimension of her body. It is the composite whole which makes her beautiful.

However, it is possible that a person reading the Holy Quran may be enamoured by the particular part he is concerned with.

One well-known government official declared his faith in Islam when he heard the verse:

Does man think that We cannot (resurrect him and)

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bring his bones together again? Yes indeed. We are able to make whole his very fingertips! (75:3 - 4).

This verse made the official think about the reason why the Almighty referred to the fingertips in particular. What is their significance? Indeed, the fingertips consist of the various patterns of fingerprints. There are no two people whose

fingerprints are identical. No doubt it is a Divine act of creation that remained unknown until its discovery in recent times. This is further proof that the Holy Quran is a Divine book, revealed to Muhammad.

There are more facts and information that still remain undiscovered yet are written about in the Holy Quran. Every now and then scholars find some new information in it which contributes to human knowledge in general and to the better understanding of Islam by all.

It is therefore essential that the Holy Quran should be reinterpreted. The man of literature should interpret it according to his field of study, likewise the legal specialist, the astronomer, the psychiatrist, the social scientist and the historian. Each may interpret it in the light of his particular area of study and prove that it is the word of God. Once the miracles of earlier prophets had happened, they were over. But the miracle of Muhammad is ever present and it is renewed every day. The miracles of the earlier prophets served as proof of the message, while in the case of Muhammad, his message itself was a miracle. May peace be upon him and all the Prophets and Messengers.

Faith in the Books

Faith in the Books

We believe in the Holy Quran and in all the other revealed books mentioned in it. These are. The Book (Scrolls) of Abraham, The Book of Moses, (the Torah - Old Testament). the psalms of David and the Bible of Jesus, (New Testament). The Holy Quran was revealed to confirm me true and original message and to expose the distortions made in earlier messages.

And unto thee (O Prophet) have we revealed this Divine Writ setting forth the truth, confirming the truth of whatever there still remains of earlier revelations and determining what is true therein. (5:48).

We therefore believe in the other revealed books where they tie in with what is said in the Holy Quran and reject contradictions.

The Scrolls of Abraham

God has informed us about what is mentioned in the Scrolls of Abraham and is repeated in the Scrolls of Moses:

That no bearer of burdens shall be made to bear another's burden... (53:38).

To happiness (in the life to come) will indeed attain he who attains to purity (in this world), and remembers his Sustainer's name and prays (unto

Him). But nay, (O men), you prefer the life of this world, although the life to come is better and more enduring. Verily (all) this has indeed been (said) in the earlier revelations - the revelations of Abraham and Moses. (87: 14 -18).

The Torah

The Torah is also a book revealed by God. It contains

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guidance for people as well as the Divine

Commandments:

But how is it that they ask thee for judgement seeing that they have the Torah, containing God's injunctions. (5:43).

Verily it is we who bestowed from on high the Torah, wherein there was guidance and light. (5:44).

And among the Divine commandments it contains are: And We ordained for them in that (Torah): a life for a life, and an eye for an eye, and a nose for a nose, and an ear for an ear, and a tooth for a tooth, and a (similar) retribution for wounds. (5:45).

The Torah also contains the glad tidings about the coming of our Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

Those who shall follow the (last) Apostle, the

unlettered Prophet whom they shall find described in the Torah that is with them. (7:151).

And the Torah describes the believers as follows:

Muhammad is God's Apostle; and those who are (truly) with him are Firm and unyielding towards all deniers of the Truth, (yet) full of mercy towards one another. Thou canst see them bowing down, prostrating themselves in prayer, seeking favour with God and (His) goodly acceptance: their marks are on their faces, traced by prostration. This is their parable in the Torah. (48:29).

The Psalms

And so to David We gave the Psalms. (4:163).

It is mentioned in the Psalms that the righteous will inherit the earth. God Almighty says in the Holy Quran:

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Before this We wrote in the Psalms, after the Message (given to Moses): "My servants the righteous shall inherit the earth." (21:105).

The earth in this verse may perhaps mean paradise, as is understood in another verse:

And they will exclaim: "All praise is due to God, who has made His promise to us come true, and has

bestowed upon us in this land (of bliss) as our portion, so that we may dwell in paradise as we please.” (39:74).

The Bible

... and We vouchsafed unto him the Gospel, wherein there was guidance and light, confirming the truth of whatever there still remained of the Torah... (5:46).

And that the Bible contains the Divine Laws: Let then, the followers of the Gospel judge in accordance with what God has revealed therein. (5:47).

We are also informed that the Bible comprises the amended laws of the Torah: And (I have come) to confirm the truth of whatever there still remains of the Torah, and to make lawful unto you some of the things which (aforetime) were forbidden to you... (3:50).

The Bible, like the Torah, conveys the glad tidings of the advent of Muhammad and a description of the believers.

Thus we believe in the books that the Almighty has revealed, and we respect the prophets. May God bless them.

CONCLUSION

We have presented in the preceding pages the basic g; principles of the Islamic faith.

The perfect Muslim believes in them and in what is stated in the Holy Quran regarding the creation of the heavens, earth and man. His behaviour and conduct in everyday life should reflect such a belief. He will therefore accept and abide by the Holy Quran, the authenticity of which he has no doubt. He will not be satisfied with reading it unless he can understand it, nor by reciting it melodiously without grasping its meaning. In fact he adopts it as a book of codes with which he can govern his daily life. He accepts what is declared to be lawful and refrains from what is forbidden. He acts on what it instructs, and abstains from what is not permitted.

Other religions may be confined to their respective places of worship. Islam however, is not confined to s the mosque. In fact its impact and influence pervades all places— the mosque, the home, the streets and government offices: It

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is a religion to be observed at times of war as well as peace. Islam is an unalienable factor in the life

of every Muslim. He is guided by its teachings on every aspect of life. It informs him of what is lawful and what is forbidden. All actions of a Muslim can be classified under one of the following five categories: Lawful, Recommended, Obligatory, Forbidden and Reprehensible.

Whereas other religions may only include forms of worship and may not include politics and acquisition of knowledge, that is not the case with Islam. Besides being a religion of worship, Islam also contains a set of civil and criminal codes of law; it includes international law, rules and regulations of administration, principles of ethics and the science of politics. You can open any book on Islamic Jurisprudence and you will find these topics discussed,

Worship in some religions may only take the form of prayer. But Islam includes every action done for the good of the people, with the intention of dedication to God besides prayer and fasting.

If religion is thought to be separate from the realm of knowledge, then Islam can be described as a religion of learning - because the very first word of Divine Revelation was "Read". It did not say, "Fight" nor did it say, "Accumulate money and possessions" or, "Renounce the world".

"Read" was the first word revealed in the Holy

Quran, followed by a discourse on knowledge. The biggest gift God has granted to mankind is the gift of knowledge, knowledge of what man did not know. No other blessing can match it - be it in the form of wealth, physical strength or fame and glory.

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Conclusion

It is necessary for every member of an Islamic society, if he can, to acquire every area of knowledge needed. No other religion on earth except Islam considers the acquisition of knowledge as a religious duty. It therefore exhorts its followers to learn the sciences of chemistry, medicine, aviation, etc.

Islam is also the religion of 'riches'. God has described wealth as *khair* - 'good'. But man's attachment to wealth is described as follows: And violent is he in his love of wealth.

(100:7).

Muslims should therefore seek to be rich, but they should acquire their wealth lawfully, and this wealth should not become an obsession. Every Muslim should understand that wealth and everything else in this universe are at his disposal. He may seek to derive good from everything he finds around him . However, he should not

become attached to what he finds and seek to glorify himself through it. If he does so, he will become a slave of wealth and consequently he will worship it besides God.

God has made wealth as a means of benefit.

But if you hoard your wealth, you become a slave and a captive of it, Our Prophet (peace be upon him) says, "miserable is the slave of money."

As for clothes, Islam considers all garments as a means of covering the body to protect it from different weather conditions. But, as with wealth, if you glorify your clothes and hoard them without wearing them, you become their slave.

Our Prophet (peace be upon him) says, "Miserable is the person who is obsessed with his clothing."

Islam is also a religion of might and power, but not based

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on injustice. It is also a religion of this world and the life hereafter.

"Our Lord! Give us good in this world and good in the hereafter." (2:201).

Islam enjoins on its followers to be true to their faith and follow Divine guidance, while, at the same time, being the most advanced, sophisticated, strong, rich and well informed people in the world.

Besides all this, every Muslim should be aware of another duty he should perform: to convey the Message of Islam to others, and to call others to the path of God with wisdom and beautiful preaching. He should not compel or force anyone to accept Islam. 'Let there be no compulsion in religion.' (2:256) He should present the salient features of Islam in a way that appeals to both the head and the heart.

Muslims should be living examples of the glorious principles of Islam. They should not present a perverted and distorted picture of it.

The Muslim missionary should be a man or woman of intellectual qualities and one who understands the needs and response, mood and wavelength of those to whom he is talking. He should also understand that Islam does not shun dialogue or debate. Everything is argued out on the basis of proof, thus anyone who speaks against Islam should be asked to give evidence.

Say, "Bring forth your argument if ye are telling the truth." (2:111).

If anyone invokes, besides God, any other god, he has no authority therefore. (23: 117)

It is impossible to give proof against the Oneness of God.

Conclusion

If such Muslim missionaries take up the task, the whole world will accept the religion of God. For God has revealed this religion and He will preserve it.

We have without doubt, sent down the message; and We will assuredly guard it (from corruption). (15:9).

Islam will remain. The future is for Islam.

However, it is now up to us Muslims to seek the privilege of spreading the Message of Islam and thus attain reward in this world and in the life hereafter. If we fail to do so. God may assign this task to others who will come into the fold of Islam and take up the *WORK of dawah*.

May God the Almighty make us worthy of our religion and grant us success in our task.

And may He pardon us and grant mercy to us.

In conclusion our prayer is - all praise be to

**God, Lord of
all the Worlds!**

Shaikh Ali Al-Tantawi was born in Damascus, Syria, in 1909. He is well-known all over the Muslim world - a recognized authority on Islamic sciences, and widely read in the modern culture. He is the author of over forty books.

The present book is one of the best introductions to Islam. It has gone into more than twenty-five Arabic editions, and translated into several languages, such as English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Indonesian, Bosnian etc.

Describing the book, Sue Lake, from the B.B.C. in London, has said: "The anecdotal examples that Shaikh Tantawi gave clarified complicated concepts about Islam, particularly about the psychology of human beings, our weaknesses, our relationship with the cosmos, and therefore the need to follow the Sharia in order to develop our inner faith and dependence on God, and therefore evolve in the best possible way during our short time on earth."

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